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It's absolutely epic!"
DUNCAN JONES
THE RISE AND FALL OF
THE
TRIGAN
EMPIRE
VOLUME VI
MIKE BUTTERWORTH - KEN ROSCOE
OLIVER FREY - GERRY WOOD

MIKE BUTTERWORTH
KEN ROSCOE
JACK PARKER
Writers

OLIVER FREY
GERRY WOOD
Artists

CHRIS WESTON
Cover Art

DAVID AGNEW
Letters

PYE PARR
Design

Thanks to:
Rob van Bavel and **Steve Holland**

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VOLUME VI

LXVI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR

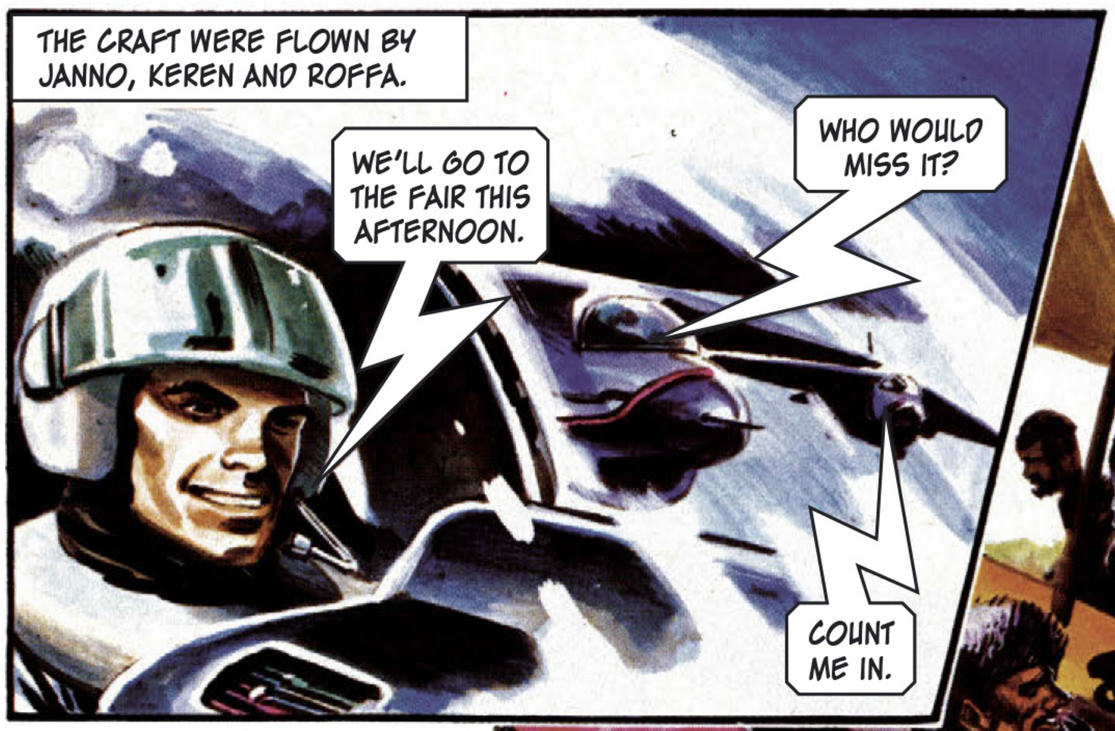
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 800 - 807

14th May – 2nd July 1977

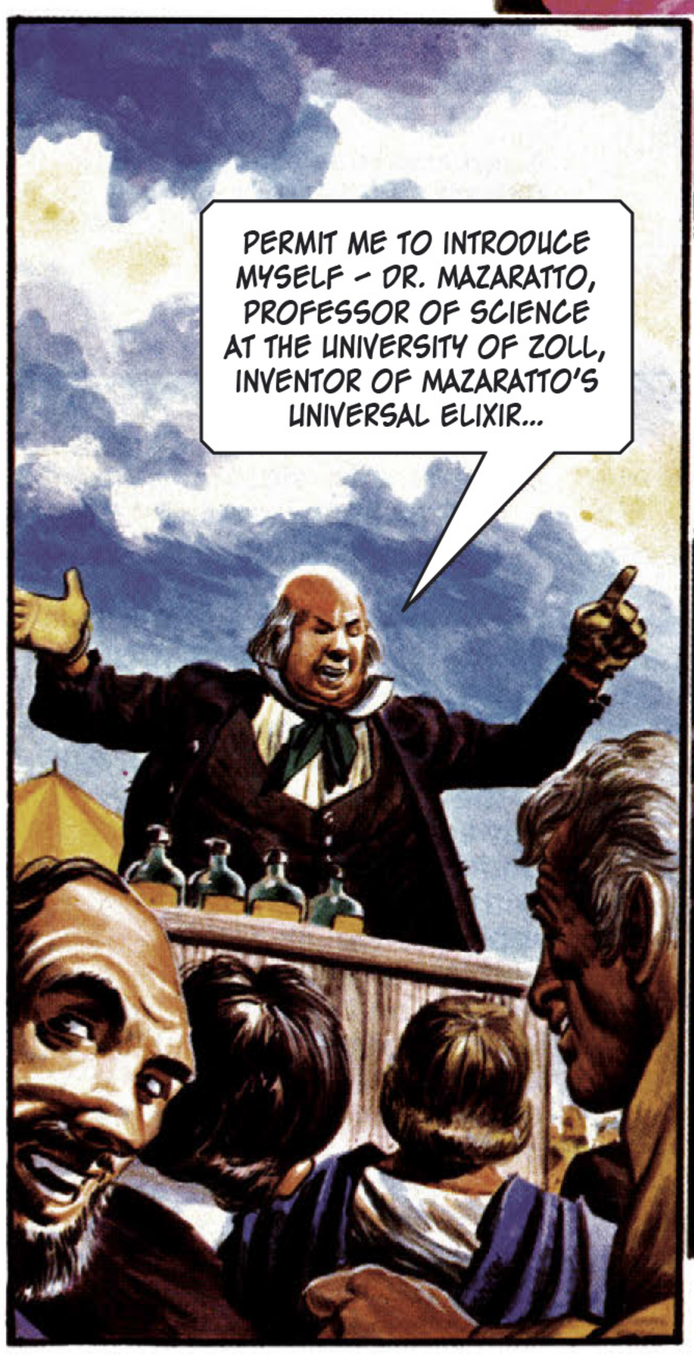
Story by Mike Butterworth

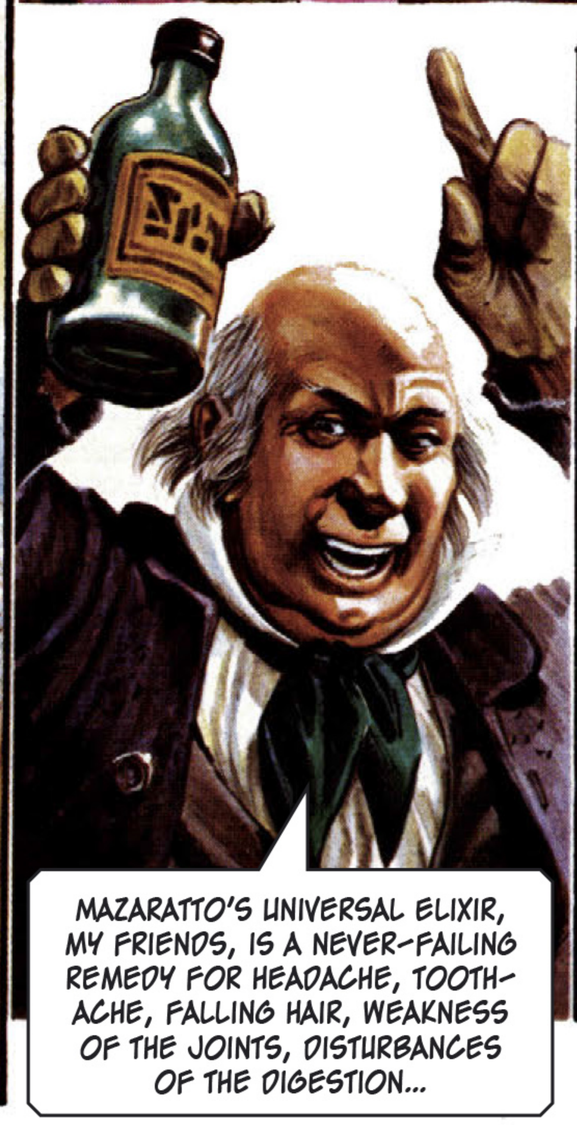
Art by Oliver Frey

LATE ONE EVENING, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC WAS WORKING IN HIS LABORATORY IN TRIGAN CITY. SUDDENLY, HE SAW A SIGN OF IMPENDING DISASTER.
THE MASS HAS BECOME UNSTABLE. FLEE FOR YOUR LIVES!
OLIVER FREY
PERIC AND HIS ASSISTANTS FLED IN PANIC...
EVACUATE THE BUILDING!
IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE.
ALL ESCAPED IN THE NICK OF TIME.
SOME TIME LATER, THREE SCOUTS OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET WERE RETURNING FROM A MISSION. THEY OBSERVED THE CROWDS OF PEOPLE MILLING TOWARDS THE GATES OF THE CITY FAR BELOW.
A WHOLE LIFE'S WORK GONE IN A FLASH.
THEY'RE GATHERING FOR THE ANNUAL FAIR.


THE CRAFT WERE FLOWN BY JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA.
WE'LL GO TO THE FAIR THIS AFTERNOON.
WHO WOULD MISS IT?
COUNT ME IN.

THAT AFTERNOON, THE THREE PILOTS STROLLED THROUGH THE CROWDED FAIRGROUND.
LOOK. A GENUINE FAKE MEDICINE MAN OF THE SORT I HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE I WAS A BOY!


PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF – DR. MAZARATTO, PROFESSOR OF SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZOLL, INVENTOR OF MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR...


MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR, MY FRIENDS, IS A NEVER-FAILING REMEDY FOR HEADACHE, TOOTH-ACHE, FALLING HAIR, WEAKNESS OF THE JOINTS, DISTURBANCES OF THE DIGESTION...

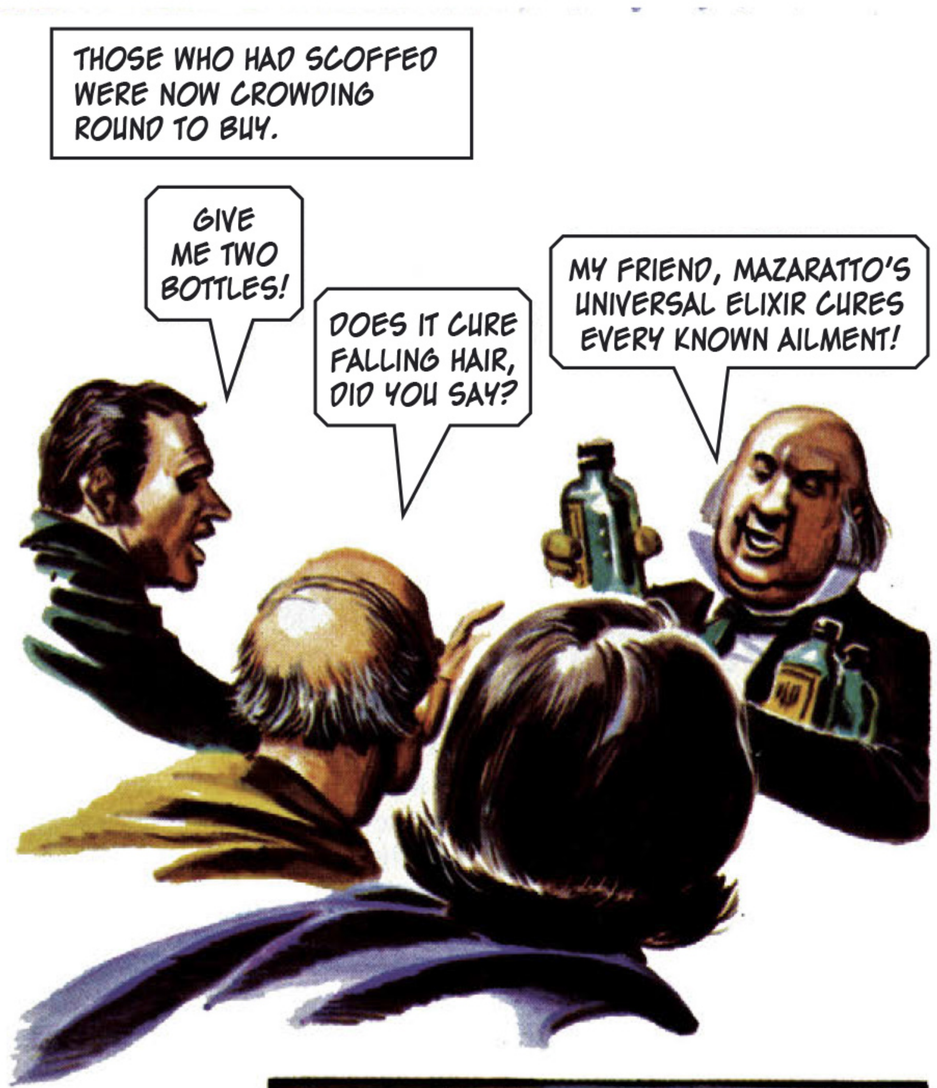
AMONG THE SCOFFERS AND MOCKERS WAS A CRIPPLE, WHO CRIED OUT IN A PLAINTIVE VOICE...
MAZARATTO, YOU'RE AN OLD FAKER!
IF YOU COULD CURE ME, MAZARATTO, I WOULD PRAISE YOU TILL MY DYING DAY!
WHAT'S THIS? A FELLOW IN NEED!

STRAIGHTWAY, THE MEDICINE PEDLAR POURED A DRAUGHT OF HIS 'ELIXIR' AND GAVE IT TO THE CRIPPLE.
TAKE IT, FRIEND. DRINK IT DOWN. TOMORROW, COME AND SEE ME HERE AND TELL ME HOW MUCH YOU ARE IMPROVED.

A FEW PEOPLE BOUGHT THE ELIXIR, BUT NOT MANY. JANNO AND HIS COMPANIONS MOVED AWAY, SMILING. BUT...
HEY! LOOK! LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENED!

LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT ME!

THE ERSTWHILE CRIPPLE EMBRACED THE ASTONISHED MEDICINE PEDLAR.
HE'S CURED ME! ONE SWALLOW OF THAT ELIXIR, AND I CAN WALK! I, WHO HAVE BEEN CRIPPLED SINCE BIRTH!
OLIVER FREY

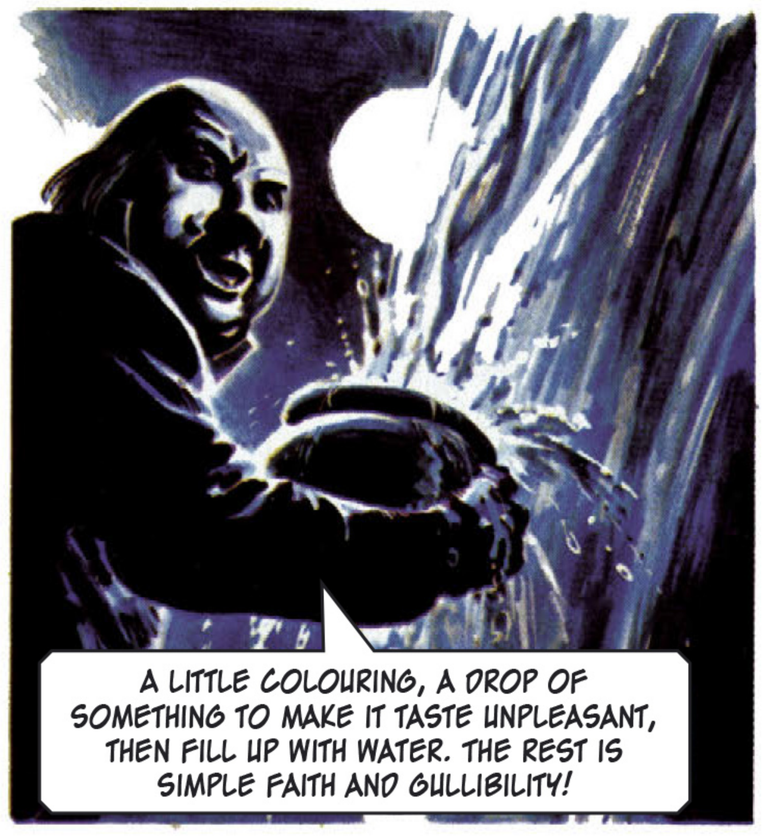

THOSE WHO HAD SCOFFED WERE NOW CROWDING ROUND TO BUY.
GIVE ME TWO BOTTLES!
DOES IT CURE FALLING HAIR, DID YOU SAY?
MY FRIEND, MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR CURES EVERY KNOWN AILMENT!

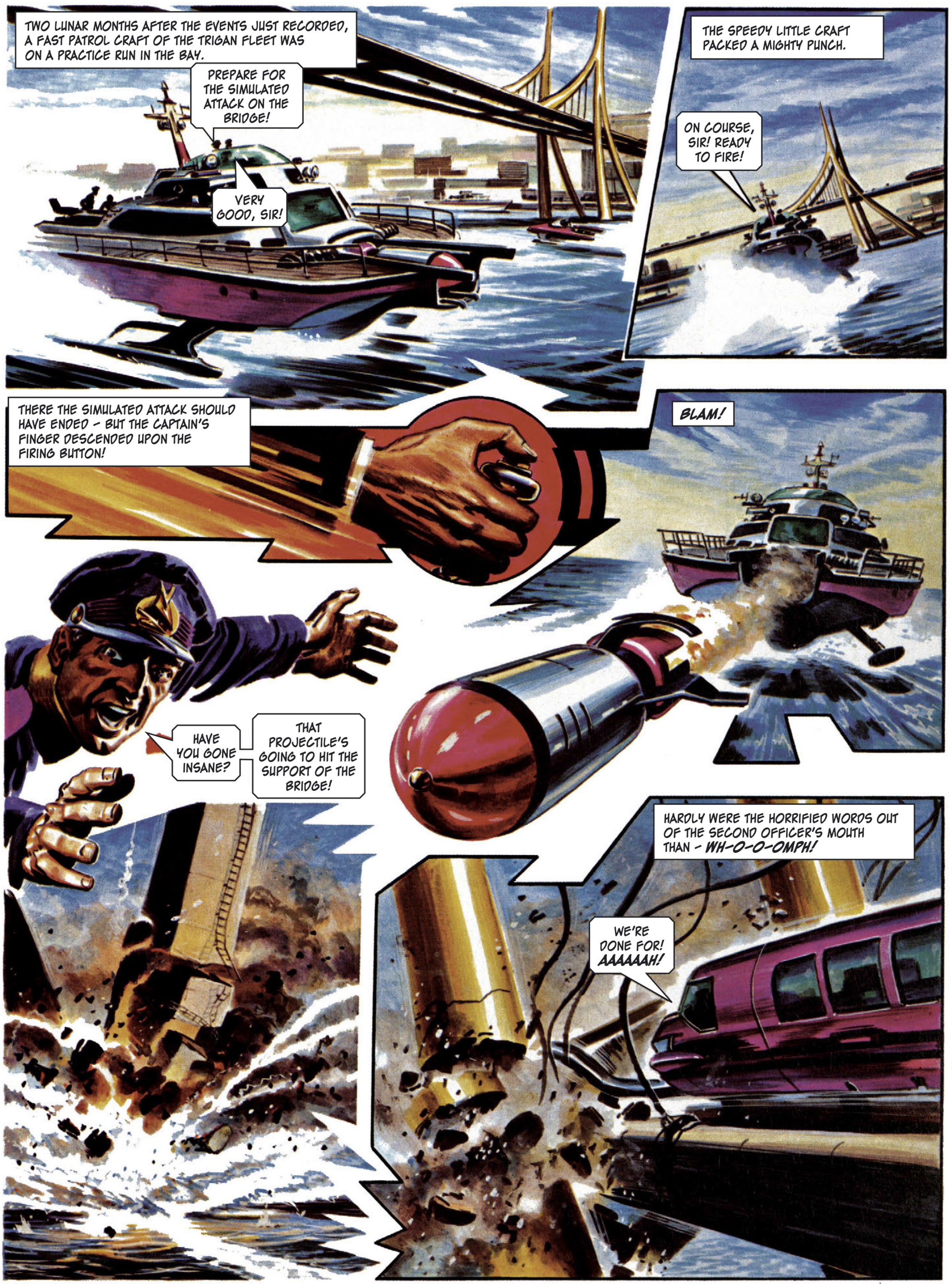
JANNO, KEREN AND ROFFA WATCHED AND WONDERED.
STRANGE THING, THAT.
GENUINE OR FAKE?
I WONDER..?

EVENING CAME, AND DR. MAZARATTO PACKED UP HIS BELONGINGS ON A CART AND LEFT THE CITY FOR ANOTHER FAIR.

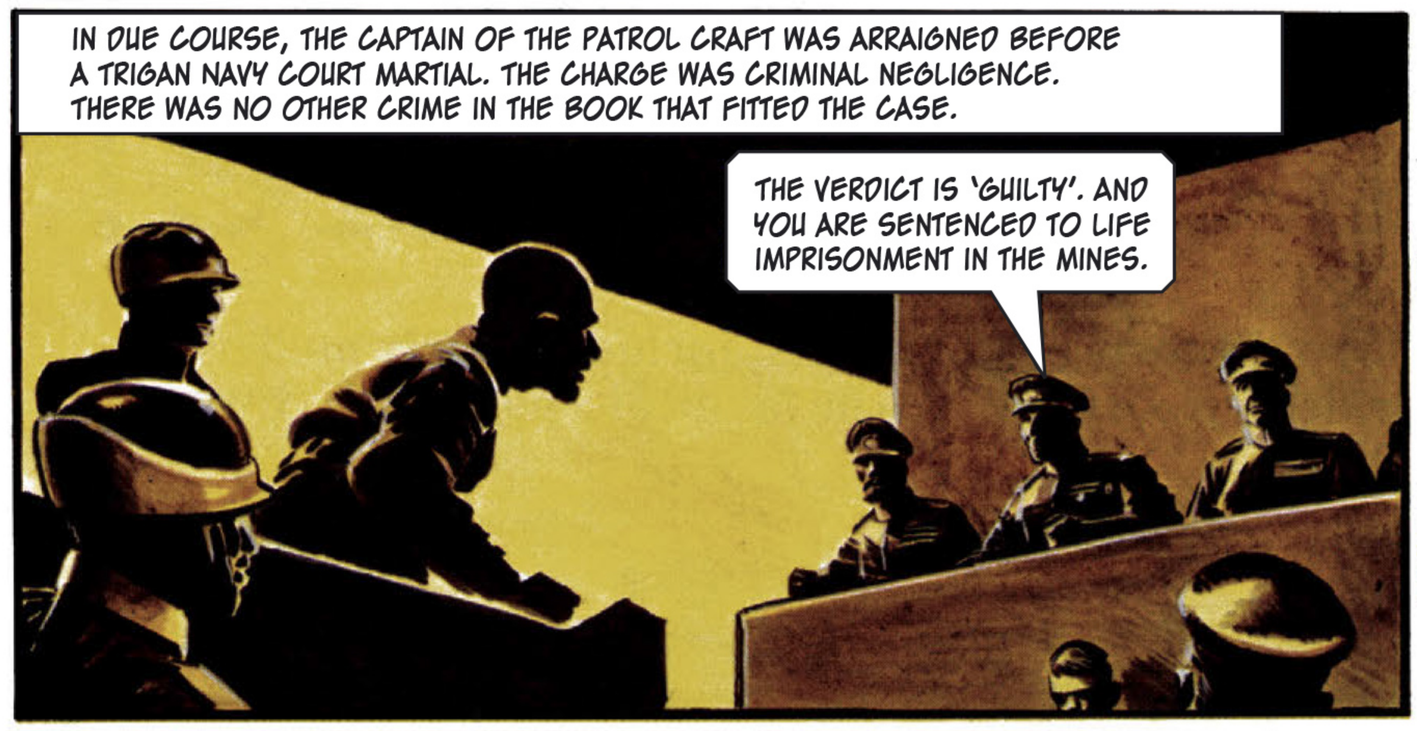
SOME DISTANCE FROM THE CITY, HE CAME UPON A FIGURE WAITING BY THE ROADSIDE.
HELLO, OLD FRIEND. WE DID WELL IN TRIGAN CITY.
IT NEVER FAILS, ROLLI. THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE GULLIBILITY OF YOUR AVERAGE TRIGAN.

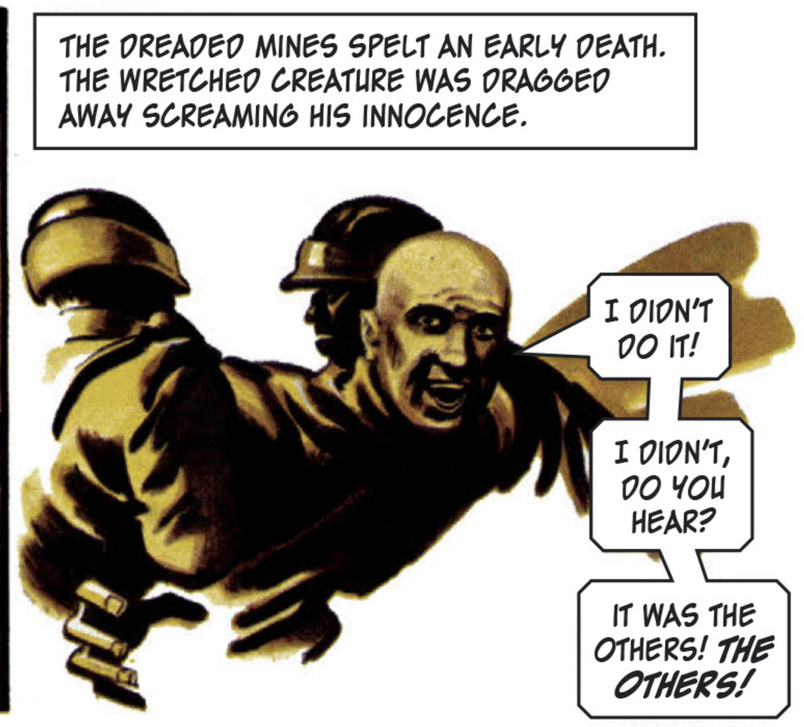
THE TWO ROGUES HAD BEEN WORKING THE FAKE MEDICINE TRICK FOR MANY LUNAR YEARS. THEY MADE CAMP BY THE ROADSIDE.
BETTER MIX UP SOME MORE OF THE ELIXIR.


A LITTLE COLOURING, A DROP OF SOMETHING TO MAKE IT TASTE UNPLEASANT, THEN FILL UP WITH WATER. THE REST IS SIMPLE FAITH AND GULLIBILITY!


TWO LUNAR MONTHS AFTER THE EVENTS JUST RECORDED, A FAST PATROL CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN FLEET WAS ON A PRACTICE RUN IN THE BAY.
PREPARE FOR THE SIMULATED ATTACK ON THE BRIDGE!
VERY GOOD, SIR!
THE SPEEDY LITTLE CRAFT PACKED A MIGHTY PUNCH.
ON COURSE, SIR! READY TO FIRE!
THERE THE SIMULATED ATTACK SHOULD HAVE ENDED – BUT THE CAPTAIN'S FINGER DESCENDED UPON THE FIRING BUTTON!
BLAM!
HAVE YOU GONE INSANE?
THAT PROJECTILE'S GOING TO HIT THE SUPPORT OF THE BRIDGE!
HARDLY WERE THE HORRIFIED WORDS OUT OF THE SECOND OFFICER'S MOUTH THAN – WH-O-O-OMPH!
WE'RE DONE FOR! AAAAAAH!

THE COLLAPSE OF THE BRIDGE AND THE ENSUING TRAIN DISASTER WERE RECORDED IN THE ANNALS OF THE EMPIRE AS ONE OF THE WORST EVER.
THE CAPTAIN OF THE PATROL CRAFT FACED THE FURY OF HIS FIRST OFFICER.
LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE, YOU MURDEROUS ANIMAL! THERE CAN'T BE A SINGLE SURVIVOR FROM THAT TRAIN!
WHAT– WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
THE CAPTAIN SEEMS PUZZLED – CONFUSED...
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? I HAVE DONE NOTHING. I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
THE PERPETRATOR OF THE DISASTER WAS, NATURALLY, PUT UNDER ARREST. INVESTIGATORS OF THE FEARED SPECIAL BRANCH SEARCHED HIS TRIGAN CITY APARTMENT.
IF HE'S IN THE PAY OF A FOREIGN POWER, HE'S CERTAINLY COVERED HIS TRACKS PRETTY WELL.
DON'T THEY ALL? ISN'T THAT THE WAY WITH TRAITORS?
THEY FOUND ONE ITEM THAT CAUSED THEM A BRIEF MOMENT OF PUZZLEMENT...
'DR. MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR'.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
THAT'S WHAT IT SAYS ON THIS BOTTLE!
WHY DON'T YOU GET ON WITH YOUR SEARCH AND STOP MESSING ABOUT WITH TRIVIA?
OLIVER FREY


IN DUE COURSE, THE CAPTAIN OF THE PATROL CRAFT WAS ARRAIGNED BEFORE A TRIGAN NAVY COURT MARTIAL. THE CHARGE WAS CRIMINAL NEGLIGENCE. THERE WAS NO OTHER CRIME IN THE BOOK THAT FITTED THE CASE.
THE VERDICT IS 'GUILTY'. AND YOU ARE SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN THE MINES.

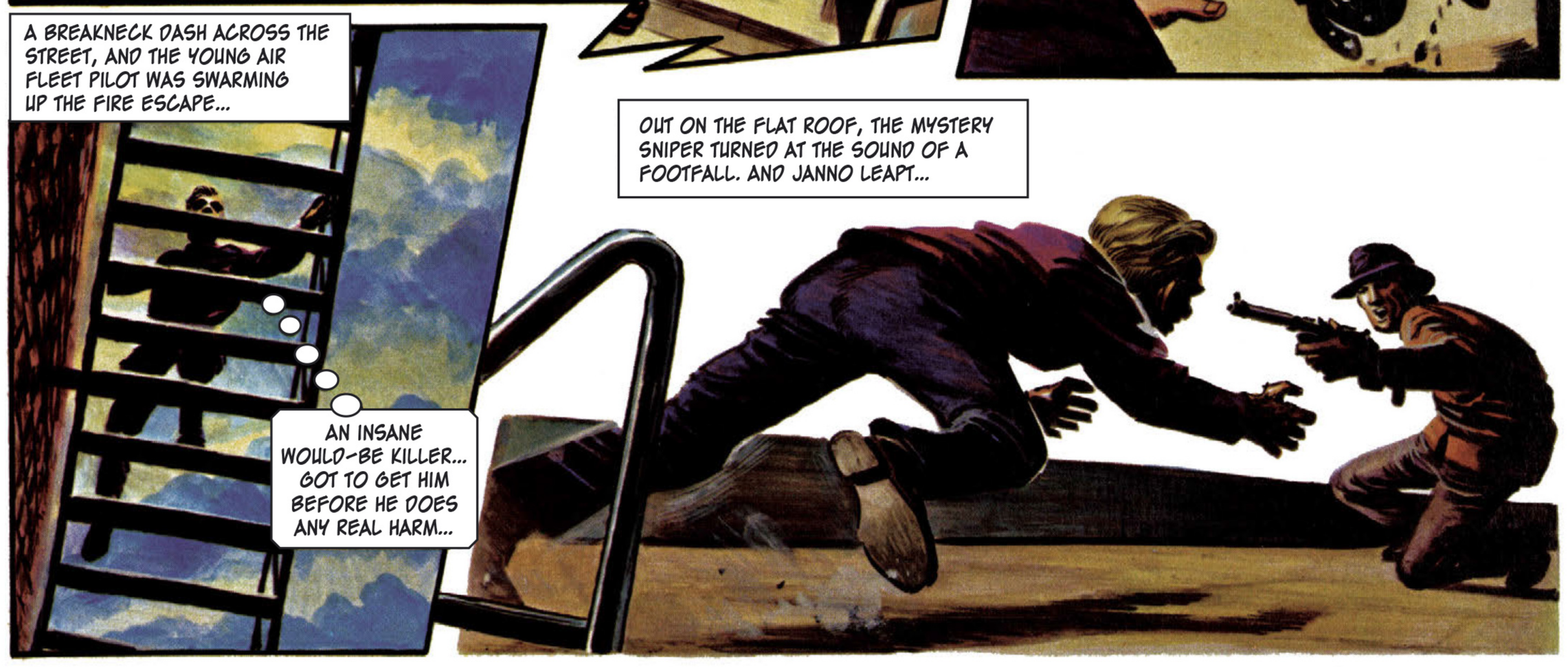

THE DREADED MINES SPELT AN EARLY DEATH. THE WRETCHED CREATURE WAS DRAGGED AWAY SCREAMING HIS INNOCENCE.
I DIDN'T DO IT!
I DIDN'T, DO YOU HEAR?
IT WAS THE OTHERS! THE OTHERS!

A LUNAR MONTH WENT BY. JANNO WAS WALKING ALONG ONE OF THE BROAD BOULEVARDS OF THE CITY...

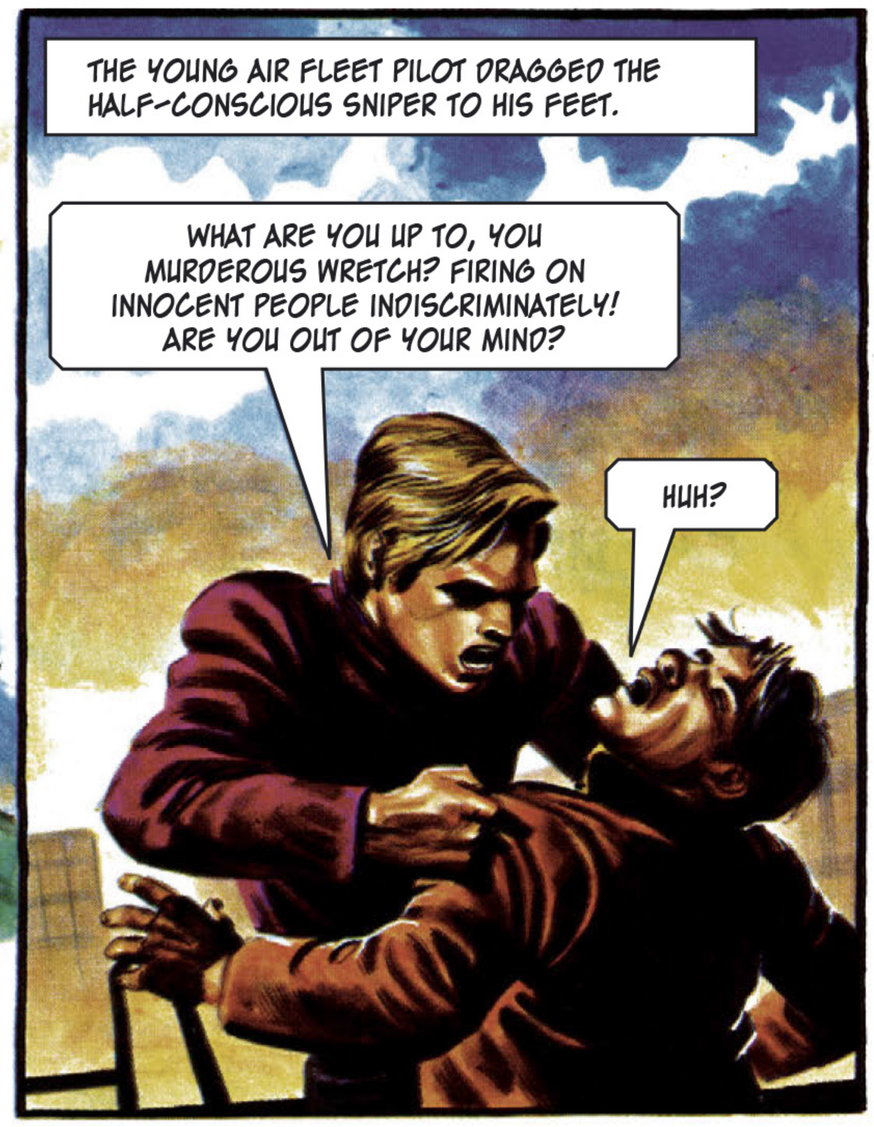
AND THEN – IT HAPPENED!
BY ALL THE STARS!

JANNO DIVED FOR THE PAVEMENT, SHOUTING A WARNING TO AN APPROACHING PEDESTRIAN.
FALL FLAT ON YOUR FACE, OR YOU'RE DEAD!
HUH?

ANOTHER PROJECTILE SCREAMED CLOSE BY THE NEWCOMER. AND JANNO SAW FROM WHENCE IT CAME...
THERE HE IS! ON THAT ROOFTOP OPPOSITE!


A BREAKNECK DASH ACROSS THE STREET, AND THE YOUNG AIR FLEET PILOT WAS SWARMING UP THE FIRE ESCAPE...
AN INSANE WOULD-BE KILLER... GOT TO GET HIM BEFORE HE DOES ANY REAL HARM...
OUT ON THE FLAT ROOF, THE MYSTERY SNIPER TURNED AT THE SOUND OF A FOOTFALL. AND JANNO LEAPT...

THE PROJECTILE ZAPPED OVER JANNO'S BENT HEAD AS HE CONNECTED WITH HIS QUARRY!
AAAAAGHH!
OLIVER FREY

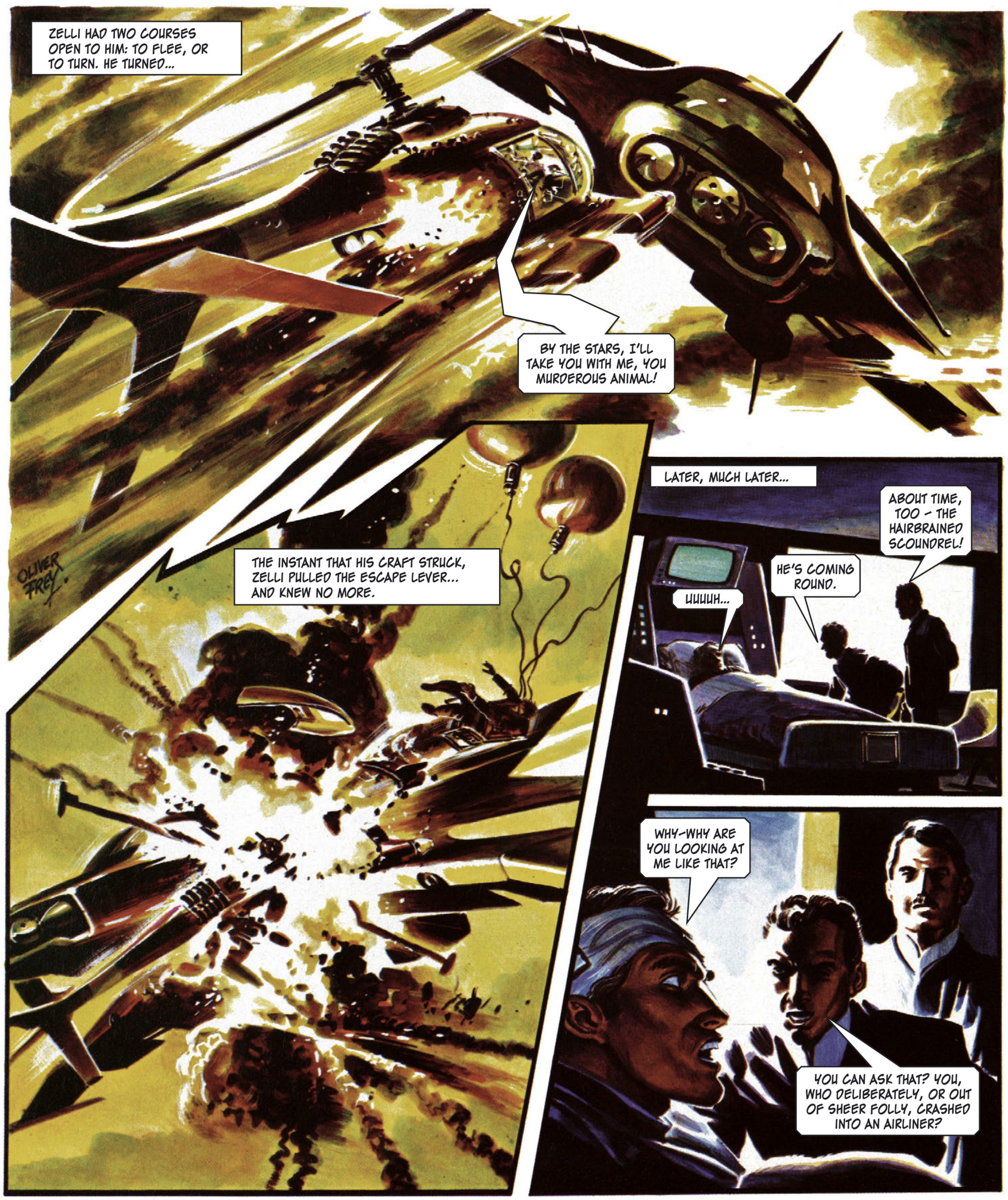

THE YOUNG AIR FLEET PILOT DRAGGED THE HALF-CONSCIOUS SNIPER TO HIS FEET.
WHAT ARE YOU UP TO, YOU MURDEROUS WRETCH? FIRING ON INNOCENT PEOPLE INDISCRIMINATELY! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?
HUH?

THE TEAM OF INVESTIGATORS FROM THE SPECIAL BRANCH VISITED THE HOME OF THE ARRESTED SNIPER, WHO WAS FOUND TO BE A CERTAIN KLOSPOR, A CLERK AT THE MINISTRY OF TAXES, WHO LIVED WITH HIS WIDOWED MOTHER.
THE OTHER'S VOICE ROSE IN A TERRIFIED WAIL...
IT ISN'T ME...IT'S THE OTHERS!
I TELL YOU MY BOY'S A GOOD BOY. NEVER HURT ANYONE IN HIS LIFE!
DID HE HAVE ANY PROBLEMS? MONEY PROBLEMS? WORK PROBLEMS? HEALTH PROBLEMS?

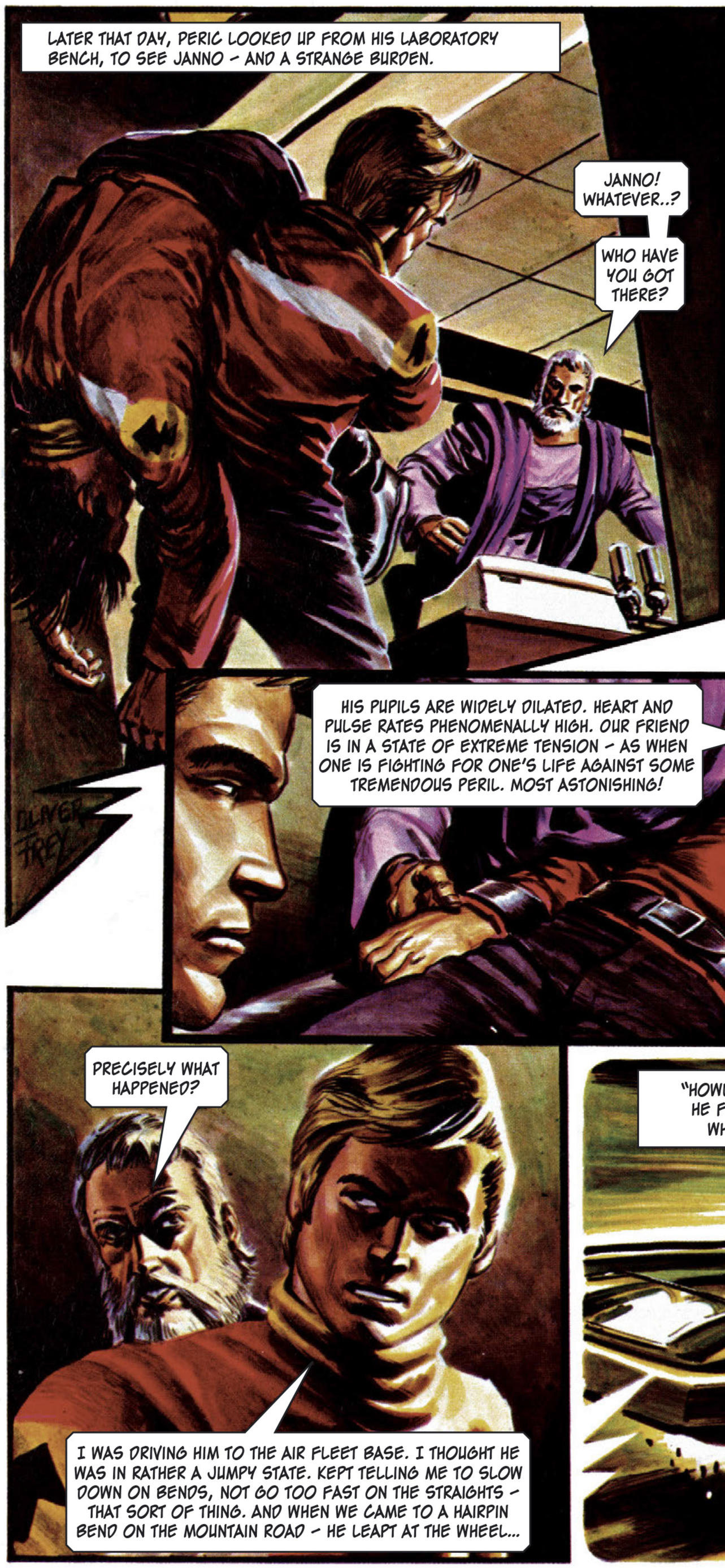
NO, HE DIDN'T! WELL, HE RECENTLY COMPLAINED OF A BAD TOOTHACHE – BUT HE WAS TAKING DR. MAZARATTO'S ELIXIR FOR THAT.
WHAT ELIXIR DID YOU SAY, LADY?
DR. MAZARATTO'S. HE BOUGHT IT AT THE TRIGAN FAIR.

THE NAME STRUCK A CHORD OF MEMORY IN THE HIGHLY TRAINED MIND OF THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR...
DR. MAZARATTO... NOW...THAT'S ODD...
VERY ODD!

MEANWHILE, DR. MAZARATTO THE FAKE MEDICINE MAN WAS DOING GREAT BUSINESS AT A FAIR IN NEARBY CATO – LARGELY THANKS TO THE ACTING OF HIS ACCOMPLICE.
HE CURED ME! ONE SWALLOW, AND I CAN WALK FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE!
I'LL TAKE ONE!
TWO FOR ME!
ONE AT A TIME, FOLKS. PLENTY FOR ALL.
ONE OF THE PURCHASERS WAS A PROSPEROUS YOUNG LAWYER NAMED ZELLI. HE SUFFERED AGONIES FROM HEADACHES AND DID NOT WAIT TO LEAVE THE FAIR BEFORE HE PARTOOK OF THE ELIXIR.
IF IT RIDS ME OF THIS AWFUL PAIN, I CAN FLY HOME IN PEACE.
BY THE TIME ZELLI REACHED HIS PRIVATE CRAFT, IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT THE PAIN HAD SOMEWHAT ABATED.
IT MAY BE MY IMAGINATION, BUT I SEEM TO FEEL A BIT BETTER...
IN THE AIR AND HEADING FOR HIS LUXURY VILLA OUT OF TOWN, HE SENSED... DANGER!
THERE'S A CRAFT FOLLOWING ME!..
IT CAME AT HIM FROM OUT OF THE SUNS – SPITTING FLAME AND DESTRUCTION!
NEXT INSTANT, HIS COCKPIT WAS A SHAMBLES OF RIDDLED WRECKAGE!


ZELLI HAD TWO COURSES OPEN TO HIM: TO FLEE, OR TO TURN. HE TURNED...
BY THE STARS, I'LL TAKE YOU WITH ME, YOU MURDEROUS ANIMAL!
OLIVER FREY
THE INSTANT THAT HIS CRAFT STRUCK, ZELLI PULLED THE ESCAPE LEVER... AND KNEW NO MORE.
LATER, MUCH LATER...
ABOUT TIME, TOO – THE HAIRBRAINED SCOUNDREL!
HE'S COMING ROUND.
UUUUH...
WHY–WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?
YOU CAN ASK THAT? YOU, WHO DELIBERATELY, OR OUT OF SHEER FOLLY, CRASHED INTO AN AIRLINER?

AN AIRLINER? BUT... IT WAS A FIGHTER CRAFT! AND IT ATTACKED ME FIRST! SHOT MY COCKPIT TO PIECES!
SAVE YOUR LIES, ZELLI. WE'VE GOT A TELERECORD OF THE WHOLE THING, SHOT FROM THE GROUND. LET HIM SEE IT!
THE PICTURE SHOWED ZELLI'S UNDAMAGED CRAFT DIVING STRAIGHT FOR...
AN UNARMED AIRLINER!
NO! NO! NO!
WERE- WERE MANY PEOPLE..?
LUCKILY, THE LINER WAS EMPTY OF PASSENGERS, AND THE CREW MANAGED TO EJECT UNHARMED.
THAT ISN'T GOING TO HELP YOU A LOT, THOUGH. PUT YOUR CLOTHES ON, ZELLI. YOU'RE COMING TO HEADQUARTERS!
LATER THAT DAY, INVESTIGATORS PICKING OVER THE WRECKAGE OF ZELLI'S CRAFT IN SEARCH OF CLUES, FOUND...
WHAT'S THIS IN HERE?
IT WAS A BOTTLE - MIRACULOUSLY UNBROKEN.
'DR. MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR'...
...NOT AGAIN!
THAT EVENING, JANNO WAS GIVING HIS COMRADE ROFFA A LIFT TO THE AIR FLEET BASE. ROFFA WAS STRANGELY RESTLESS... NERVOUS...
CAREFUL ON THE NEXT BEND, JANNO. BETTER BRAKE NOW...
ON REACHING THE BEND - IT HAPPENED!
GOODBYE, OLD FRIEND! HAVE A GOOD TRIP! HEH, HEH, HEH!
NO TIME TO LEAP CLEAR HIMSELF! ROFFA MADE A GRAB FOR THE WHEEL TO FIGHT THE RUNAWAY AUTO ROUND THE HAIRPIN BEND!
AAAAAAH... AAAAAAAH...


LATER THAT DAY, PERIC LOOKED UP FROM HIS LABORATORY BENCH, TO SEE JANNO – AND A STRANGE BURDEN.
JANNO! WHATEVER..?
WHO HAVE YOU GOT THERE?

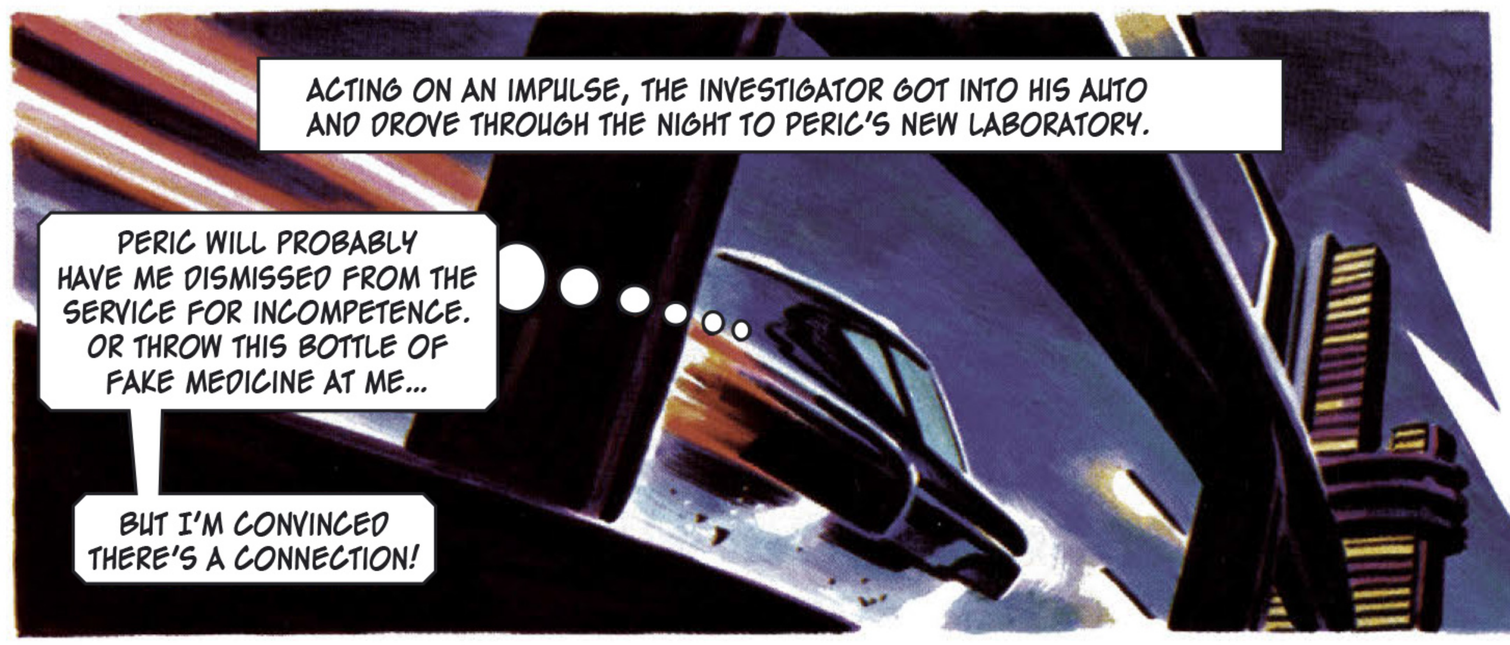
IT'S ROFFA. I THINK HE'S GONE INSANE, PERIC. WE'D BETTER SECURE HIM SAFELY BEFORE HE RECOVERS CONSCIOUSNESS.

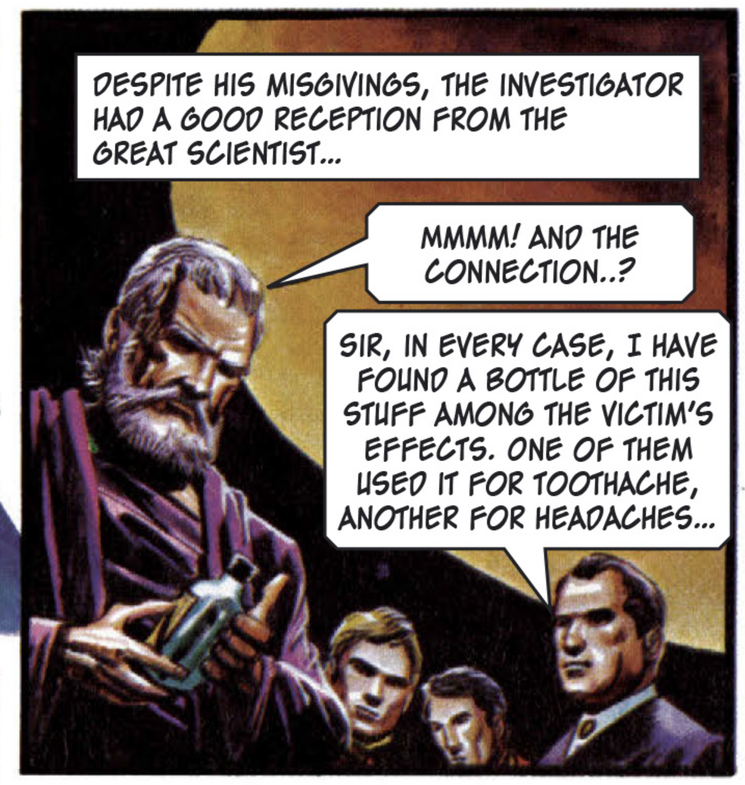
HIS PUPILS ARE WIDELY DILATED. HEART AND PULSE RATES PHENOMENALLY HIGH. OUR FRIEND IS IN A STATE OF EXTREME TENSION – AS WHEN ONE IS FIGHTING FOR ONE'S LIFE AGAINST SOME TREMENDOUS PERIL. MOST ASTONISHING!
PRECISELY WHAT HAPPENED?
I WAS DRIVING HIM TO THE AIR FLEET BASE. I THOUGHT HE WAS IN RATHER A JUMPY STATE. KEPT TELLING ME TO SLOW DOWN ON BENDS, NOT GO TOO FAST ON THE STRAIGHTS – THAT SORT OF THING. AND WHEN WE CAME TO A HAIRPIN BEND ON THE MOUNTAIN ROAD – HE LEAPT AT THE WHEEL...

"HOWLING LIKE A MANIAC, HE FOUGHT TO GET THE WHEEL FROM ME!"
NO! NO! HE SHAN'T KILL ME. HE SHAN'T!

"ONLY ONE THING SAVED US BOTH FROM DESTRUCTION..."
UUUUGH!
SORRY, OLD FRIEND, BUT...
AND YOU SAY THAT HE WAS FIGHTING TO GET THE WHEEL – TO SAVE HIMSELF?
YES, IF I HADN'T MANAGED TO KNOCK HIM OUT WITH ONE LUCKY BLOW, THE BOTH OF US WOULD HAVE ENDED UP IN THE WRECKAGE OF THE AUTO AT THE FOOT OF THE CLIFF!
BEFORE JANNO COULD ANSWER, ROFFA'S EYES FLICKERED OPEN. AS SOON AS HE SAW HIS ERSTWHILE FRIEND, HE CRIED OUT.
AAAAAAAH! LOOK OUT FOR YOURSELF, PERIC! HE'LL KILL YOU! HE'S MAD! MAD!
THE MORE THEY TRIED TO CALM HIM, THE MORE FRANTIC GREW HIS CRIES.
ROFFA, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG.
LIAR! MURDERER! YOU DELIBERATELY LEAPT OUT OF THAT AUTO AND SENT IT HURTLING TO DISASTER! IF I HADN'T MANAGED TO GRAB THE WHEEL AND SAVE MYSELF...
A JAB OF A NEEDLE, AND HIS RAVINGS CEASED.
AAAAAH... AAAAHHHH...
THERE. HE'LL SLEEP FOR THE REST OF THE DAY AND WAKE UP WITH A BAD HEADACHE. AND THEN WE'LL TRY TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS BUSINESS.
I AM BEGINNING TO SEE A PATTERN EMERGE. THIS IS THE FOURTH SUCH CASE THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO MY NOTICE.
THE FOURTH? THEN YOU THINK..?
I THINK THAT THE DISASTROUS ATTACK UPON THE TRIGAN BAY BRIDGE...
THE CASE OF THE ROOFTOP SNIPER...
AND THE DESTRUCTION OF AN AIRLINER...
ARE ALL IN SOME WAY CONNECTED. AND SO IS THIS PRESENT BUSINESS WITH ROFFA. WE MUST FIND THAT CONNECTION, MY FRIEND – BEFORE WORSE DISASTERS TAKE PLACE!

OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT NIGHT, PERIC PLAYED TELERECORDS OF THE VICTIMS GIVING EVIDENCE...
IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO DESTROY THE BRIDGE! THE ENEMY WAS ADVANCING ACROSS IT TO TAKE THE CITY!
EVERYONE'S TRYING TO DESTROY ME! I HAVE TO PROTECT MYSELF!
THE FIGHTER CRAFT ATTACKED ME FIRST! SHOT MY COCKPIT TO PIECES!
OLIVER FREY
THE GREAT SCIENTIST MADE HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE.
THEY ALL TELL THE SAME STORY! EVERY ONE OF THOSE POOR WRETCHES SUFFERED FROM TEMPORARY DELUSIONS OF PERSECUTION. WHAT THEY DID WAS IN RETALIATION TO IMAGINARY AGGRESSION!
ROFFA, NOW RECOVERED FROM HIS OWN DELUSIONS, WAS ONE OF PERIC'S LISTENERS.
ROFFA, HERE, THOUGHT THAT YOU – HIS BEST FRIEND – WAS PLANNING TO MURDER HIM.
THAT'S ABSOLUTELY CORRECT! I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER ME – BUT I DISTINCTLY SAW JANNO LEAP OUT OF THE CAR AND SEND IT HURTLING TO DESTRUCTION!
I SUSPECT SOME OUT-SIDE AGENCY. A POISON, PERHAPS. SOME SUBSTANCE THAT CAN TEMPORARILY POISON THE MIND...
MEANWHILE, SPECIAL INVESTIGATORS WHO WERE WORKING ON THE CASE MADE A ROUTINE SEARCH OF ROFFA'S APARTMENT.
NOT AGAIN!
'DR. MAZARATTO'S UNIVERSAL ELIXIR'!
THIS REALLY IS GETTING TO BE MORE THAN A COINCIDENCE!

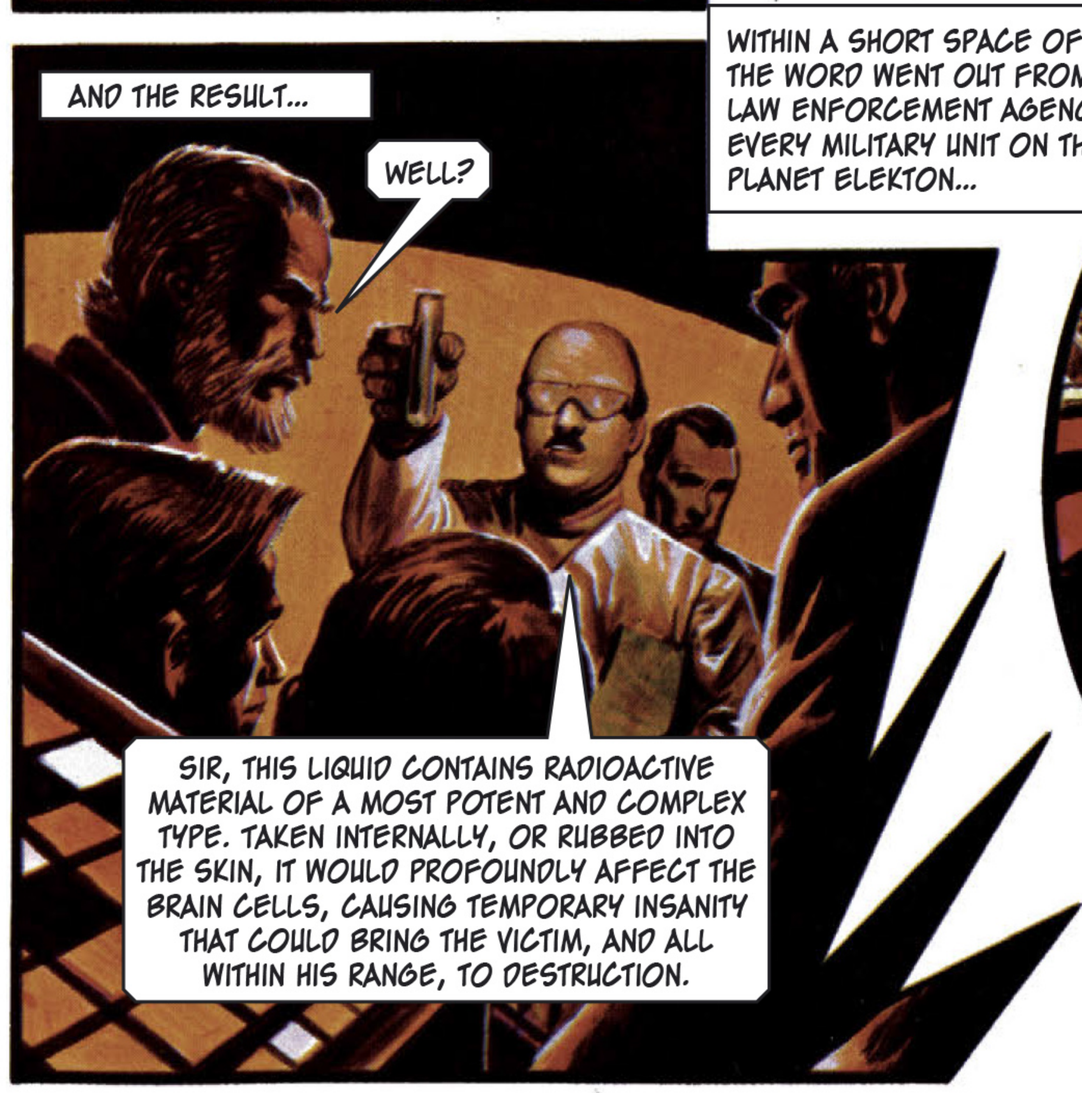

ACTING ON AN IMPULSE, THE INVESTIGATOR GOT INTO HIS AUTO AND DROVE THROUGH THE NIGHT TO PERIC'S NEW LABORATORY.
PERIC WILL PROBABLY HAVE ME DISMISSED FROM THE SERVICE FOR INCOMPETENCE. OR THROW THIS BOTTLE OF FAKE MEDICINE AT ME...
BUT I'M CONVINCED THERE'S A CONNECTION!


DESPITE HIS MISGIVINGS, THE INVESTIGATOR HAD A GOOD RECEPTION FROM THE GREAT SCIENTIST...
MMMM! AND THE CONNECTION..?
SIR, IN EVERY CASE, I HAVE FOUND A BOTTLE OF THIS STUFF AMONG THE VICTIM'S EFFECTS. ONE OF THEM USED IT FOR TOOTHACHE, ANOTHER FOR HEADACHES...

ALL EYES TURNED TO ROFFA, WHO LOOKED EMBARRASSED.
AND WHAT DID YOU USE IT FOR?
WELL, I'VE HAD THIS IMPRESSION THAT I'M LOSING MY HAIR. KNOWING YOU'D LAUGH AT ME, I SLIPPED BACK, THAT DAY AT THE FAIR, AND BOUGHT A BOTTLE...

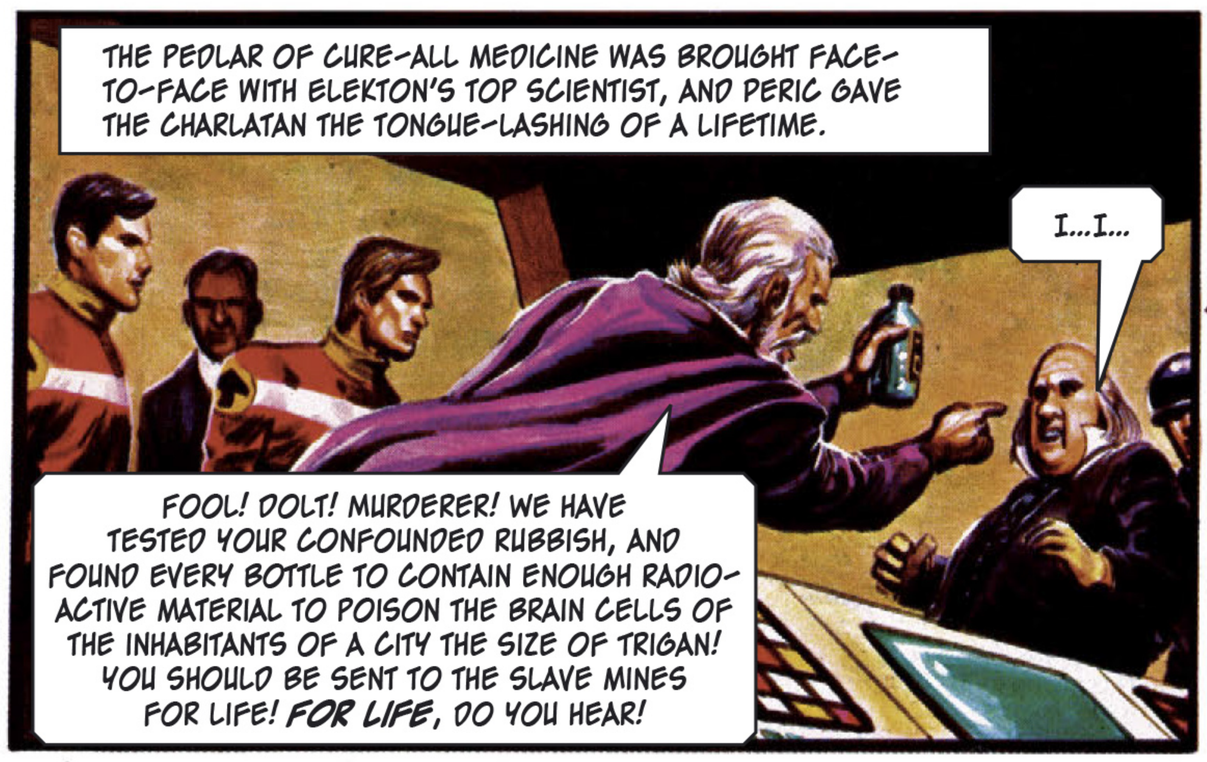
PERIC CALLED TO HIS ASSISTANTS.
TEST THAT LIQUID BY EVERY KNOWN MEANS! RIP IT APART! I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S IN IT - AND I WANT THE ANSWER QUICKLY!

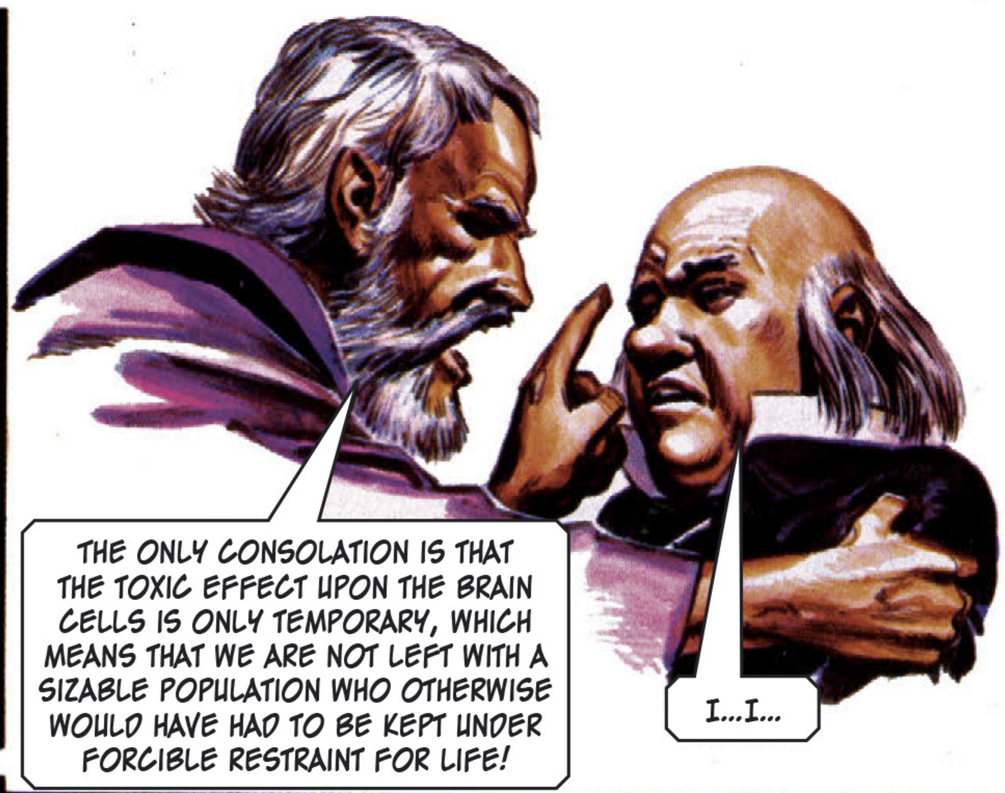
BEFORE THE AWESTRUCK EYES OF THE ONLOOKERS, THE SAMPLE OF ELIXIR WAS SUBJECTED TO DEVASTATING SCIENTIFIC TESTING OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR KIND.

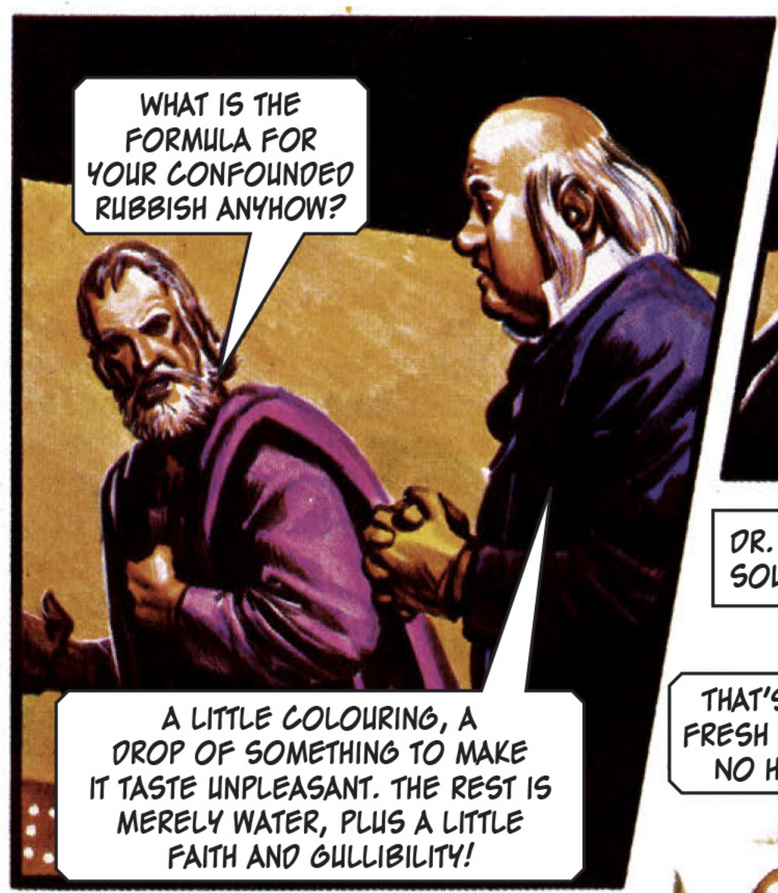

AND THE RESULT...
WELL?
SIR, THIS LIQUID CONTAINS RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL OF A MOST POTENT AND COMPLEX TYPE. TAKEN INTERNALLY, OR RUBBED INTO THE SKIN, IT WOULD PROFOUNDLY AFFECT THE BRAIN CELLS, CAUSING TEMPORARY INSANITY THAT COULD BRING THE VICTIM, AND ALL WITHIN HIS RANGE, TO DESTRUCTION.

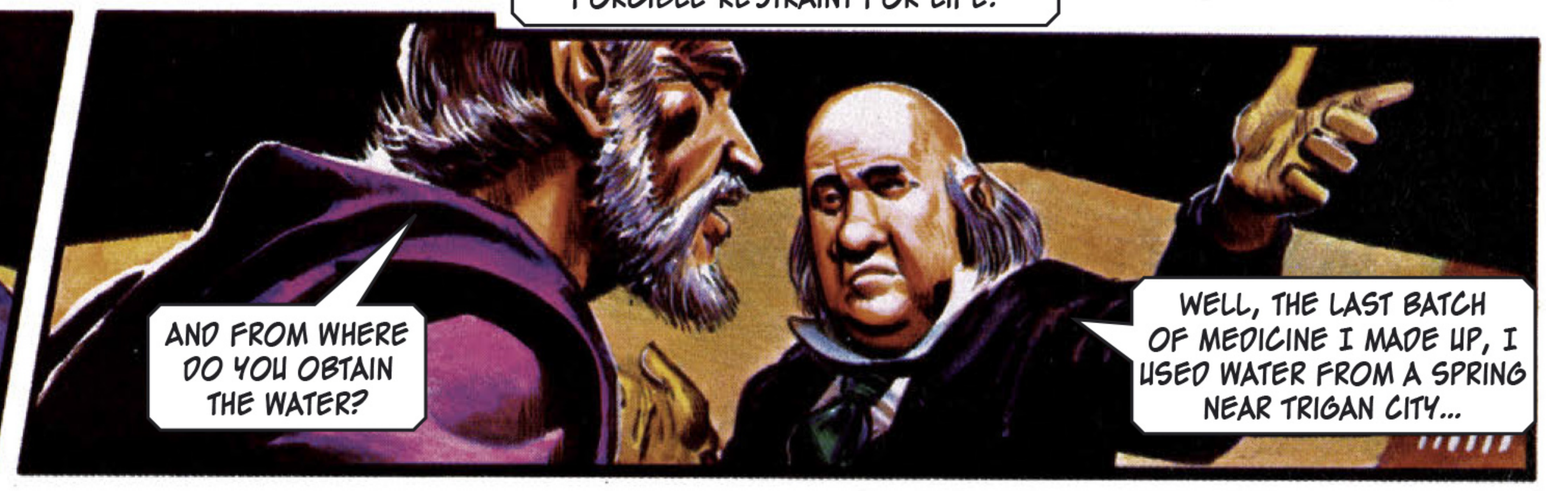
WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME, THE WORD WENT OUT FROM EVERY LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY, EVERY MILITARY UNIT ON THE PLANET ELEKTON...
AGED ABOUT SIXTY LUNAR YEARS - HEIGHT, SEVEN RUBITS - WEIGHT, THIRTY ZENS - BALD-HEADED ON TOP, GREY AT THE SIDES - LAST SEEN WEARING BLACK COAT AND GOWN. GOES BY THE ALIAS OF DOCTOR MAZARATTO, PROFESSOR OF SCIENCE...
THE SUBJECT MUST BE FOUND AT ALL COSTS!
IMMEDIATELY!

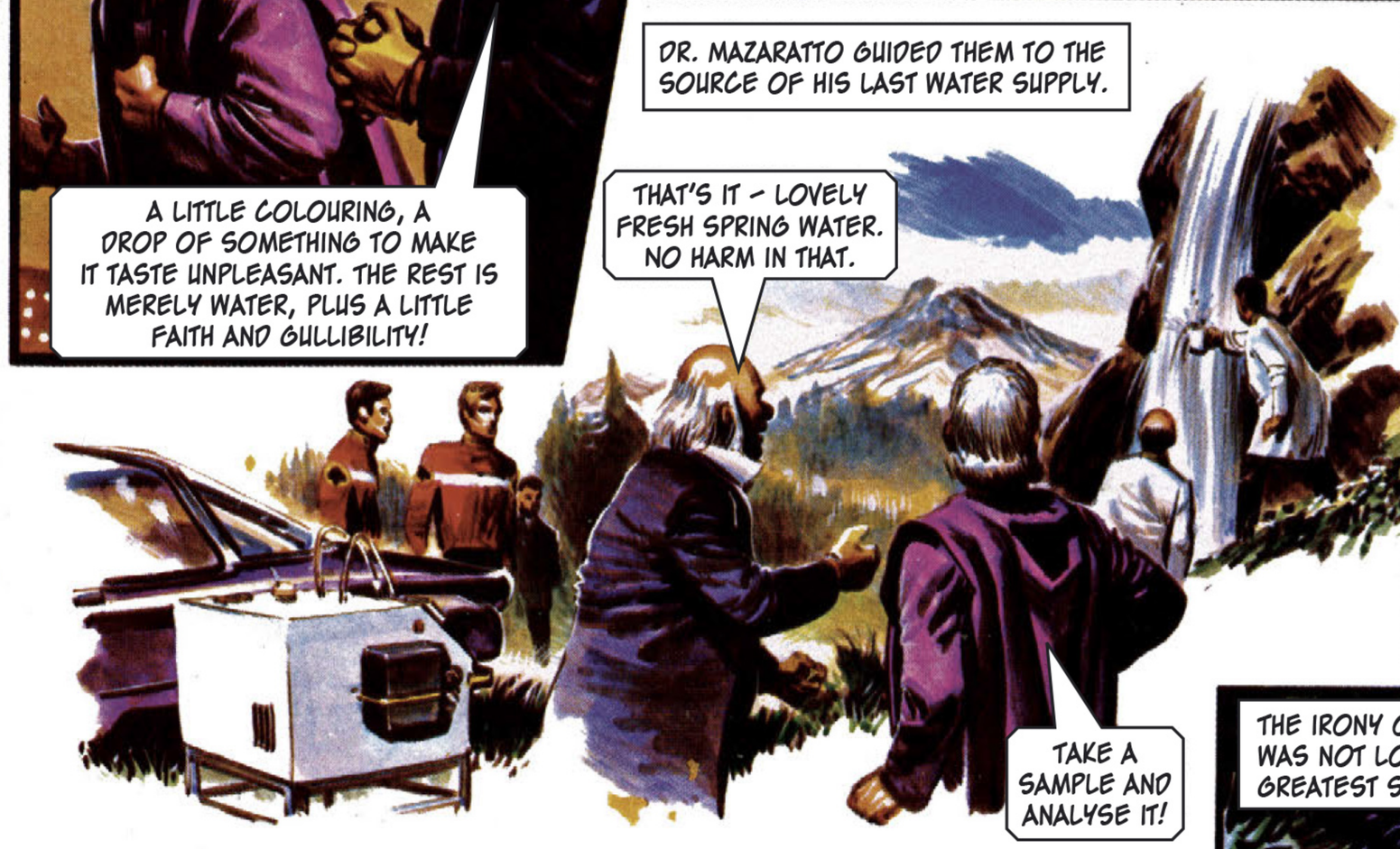
THE SEARCH WAS ON. UNITS OF EVERY AIR FLEET ON THE PLANET FLEW ROUND-THE-CLOCK, LOW-LEVEL PROBE SORTIES.
HABITATIONS AHEAD, SKIPPER.
A GATHERING OF PEOPLE OUTSIDE THAT SMALL TOWN AHEAD. LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF FAIRGROUND.
OLIVER FREY
BELOW, A SMALL-TOWN FAIR WAS IN PROGRESS. THE LARGEST CROWD WAS GATHERED AROUND...
DOCTOR MAZARATTO, MY FRIENDS! PROFESSOR OF SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZOLL, INVENTOR OF THIS – THE UNIVERSAL ELIXIR...
ALL EYES SWEPT UPWARDS AT THE ROAR OF ENGINES. AND THEN, IT HAPPENED...
HEY! LOOK!
TWO ARMED SKYMEN DESCENDED UPON THE FAIR – AND CONFRONTED DR. MAZARATTO.
WHAT-WHAT IS THIS?
MAZARATTO, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST, AND YOUR ENTIRE STOCK IS CONFISCATED.


THE PEDLAR OF CURE-ALL MEDICINE WAS BROUGHT FACE-TO-FACE WITH ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST, AND PERIC GAVE THE CHARLATAN THE TONGUE-LASHING OF A LIFETIME.
I...I...
FOOL! DOLT! MURDERER! WE HAVE TESTED YOUR CONFOUNDED RUBBISH, AND FOUND EVERY BOTTLE TO CONTAIN ENOUGH RADIO-ACTIVE MATERIAL TO POISON THE BRAIN CELLS OF THE INHABITANTS OF A CITY THE SIZE OF TRIGAN! YOU SHOULD BE SENT TO THE SLAVE MINES FOR LIFE! FOR LIFE, DO YOU HEAR!

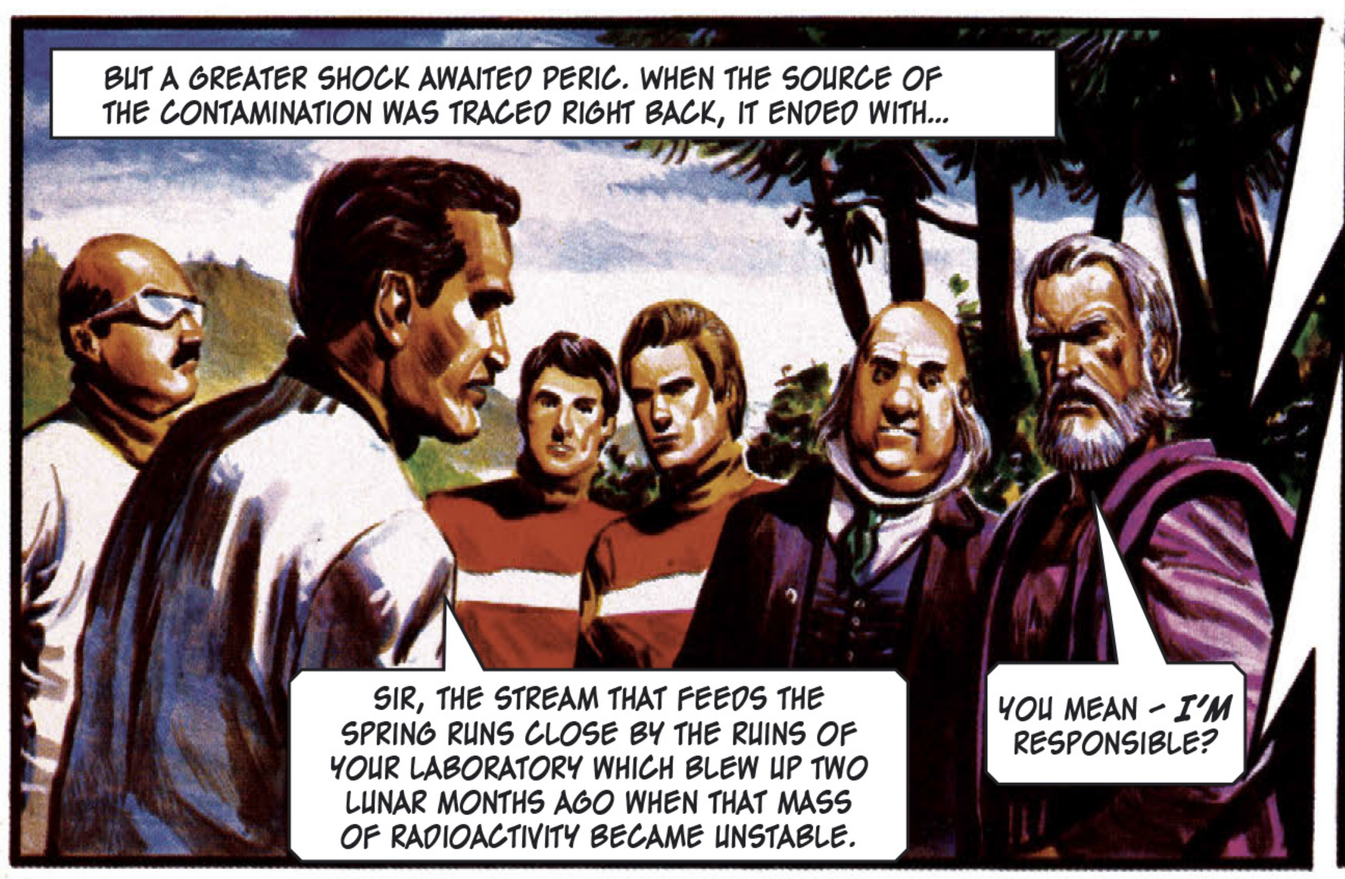

THE ONLY CONSOLATION IS THAT THE TOXIC EFFECT UPON THE BRAIN CELLS IS ONLY TEMPORARY, WHICH MEANS THAT WE ARE NOT LEFT WITH A SIZABLE POPULATION WHO OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE KEPT UNDER FORCIBLE RESTRAINT FOR LIFE!
I...I...


WHAT IS THE FORMULA FOR YOUR CONFOUNDED RUBBISH ANYHOW?
A LITTLE COLOURING, A DROP OF SOMETHING TO MAKE IT TASTE UNPLEASANT. THE REST IS MERELY WATER, PLUS A LITTLE FAITH AND GULLIBILITY!


AND FROM WHERE DO YOU OBTAIN THE WATER?
WELL, THE LAST BATCH OF MEDICINE I MADE UP, I USED WATER FROM A SPRING NEAR TRIGAN CITY...


DR. MAZARATTO GUIDED THEM TO THE SOURCE OF HIS LAST WATER SUPPLY.
THAT'S IT - LOVELY FRESH SPRING WATER. NO HARM IN THAT.
TAKE A SAMPLE AND ANALYSE IT!

STRINGENT TESTS PRODUCED THE DRAMATIC VERDICT...
THIS WATER IS ALMOST PURE RADIO-ACTIVITY OF THE MOST POTENT TYPE!


BUT A GREATER SHOCK AWAITED PERIC. WHEN THE SOURCE OF THE CONTAMINATION WAS TRACED RIGHT BACK, IT ENDED WITH...
SIR, THE STREAM THAT FEEDS THE SPRING RUNS CLOSE BY THE RUINS OF YOUR LABORATORY WHICH BLEW UP TWO LUNAR MONTHS AGO WHEN THAT MASS OF RADIOACTIVITY BECAME UNSTABLE.
YOU MEAN - I'M RESPONSIBLE?

THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION WAS NOT LOST UPON ELEKTON'S GREATEST SCIENTIST.
I FAILED TO ANTICIPATE THE DANGER. HOW THEN CAN I BLAME A FAKE MEDICINE MAN?
I SHALL RECOMMEND THAT MAZARATTO BE SET FREE.

LXVII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE DIGGER

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 808 - 815

9th July – 27th August 1977

Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Oliver Frey

IN THE YEAR OF LOTT, THE EMPEROR FLEW OVER THE MASSIVE PIECE OF ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING THAT WENT BY THE SIMPLE NAME OF "THE DIGGER".

ALL IS IN READINESS TO BEGIN, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

TRIGO GAZED DOWN – AS DID HIS STAFF – IN AWE.

AND THAT THING IS GOING TO BORE A TUNNEL RIGHT THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN, BEFORE OUR VERY EYES – TODAY?

IT WILL BE THROUGH BY NOON TODAY, SIRE.

OLIVER FREY

THEN IT HAPPENED. WITH NO ONE TO GUIDE IT BUT ITS INTERIOR 'BRAIN', THE MONSTER CRAWLED TOWARDS THE CLIFF-FACE AND ENTERED!

SHORTLY AFTER NOON, BEFORE THE WATCHING EYES OF TRIGO, HIS STAFF, AND WAITING THOUSANDS, THE DIGGER EMERGED AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN!

BY ALL THE STARS! I WOULD NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT POSSIBLE!

AND THERE'S NO ONE INSIDE IT, SIRE!

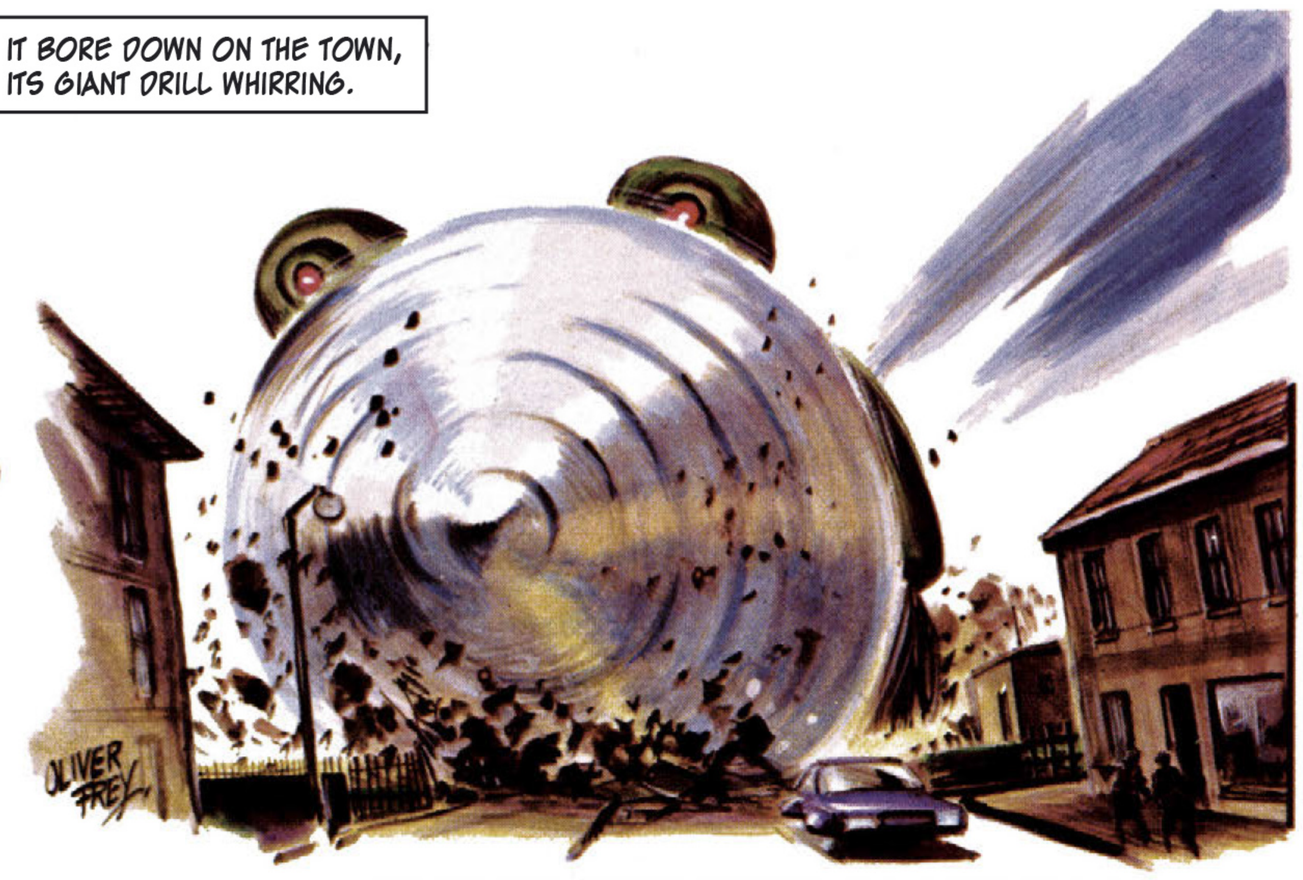
THE PROJECT ENGINEER AND HIS STAFF WERE PRESENTED TO THE EMPEROR.

A TRULY MAGNIFICENT EFFORT.

MANY THANKS, IMPERIAL MAJESTY.

THE CEREMONY OVER AND THE IMPERIAL PARTY HAVING DEPARTED, THE PROJECT ENGINEER HAD A ROUTINE CASE OF TROUBLE. THE OBJECT OF THE TROUBLE WAS A WAYWARD ASSISTANT NAMED ROLLAH.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOU, ROLLAH! YOU'RE IDLE, INCOMPETENT, ALWAYS LATE ON THE JOB, AND A POSITIVE DANGER TO THE REST OF THE TEAM!
IT'S A LIE! YOU'VE GOT A DOWN ON ME BECAUSE I KNOW MORE ABOUT ELECTRONICS THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW!
THAT'S THE END OF IT! YOU'RE FIRED!
YOU CAN'T - YOU CAN'T FIRE ME!
I HAVE FIRED YOU!
WHEN ROLLAH WENT INTO THE DIGGER TO COLLECT HIS EQUIPMENT, HIS MIND TEEMED WITH THOUGHTS OF - VENGEANCE!
I'LL GET MY OWN BACK ON THEM ALL, THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO! I'LL SHOW THEM SOMETHING ABOUT ELECTRONICS!
DEEP IN THE MAZE OF ELECTRONICS THAT CONSTITUTED THE BRAIN OF THE VAST MACHINE, ROLLAH MADE - CERTAIN ADJUSTMENTS!
UNLESS I'M VERY MUCH MISTAKEN, THEY'RE GOING TO FIND THE DIGGER'S PERFORMANCE GREATLY CHANGED NEXT TIME THEY START IT UP, HEH, HEH!
AS ROLLAH WALKED AWAY, HE WAS UNAWARE THAT THE GREAT EYE-LIKE HEADLIGHTS OF THE DIGGER...FOLLOWED HIM!
PITY I WON'T BE AROUND TO SEE THE CHAOS!
AND THEN - THE DIGGER BEGAN TO MOVE OF ITS OWN ACCORD!
AAAAAAAH! IT'S COMING AFTER ME!
THE GREAT DRILL HEAD BEGAN TO REVOLVE. THE HATE-FILLED EYES SCANNED THE HORIZON. SOME DISTANCE AWAY WAS A SMALL TOWN. THE DIGGER STARTED TOWARDS IT, THE ROAR OF ITS MACHINERY SOUNDING LIKE THE HOWL OF A PREHISTORIC BEAST!
AAAAAAAAAAAGH!

THE QUIET OF THE SMALL TOWN WAS BROKEN BY THE DISTANT RUMBLE OF HEAVY MACHINERY.
AAAAAAAGH! LOOK!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
IT'S COMING FOR US!


IT BORE DOWN ON THE TOWN, ITS GIANT DRILL WHIRRING.
OLIVER FREY

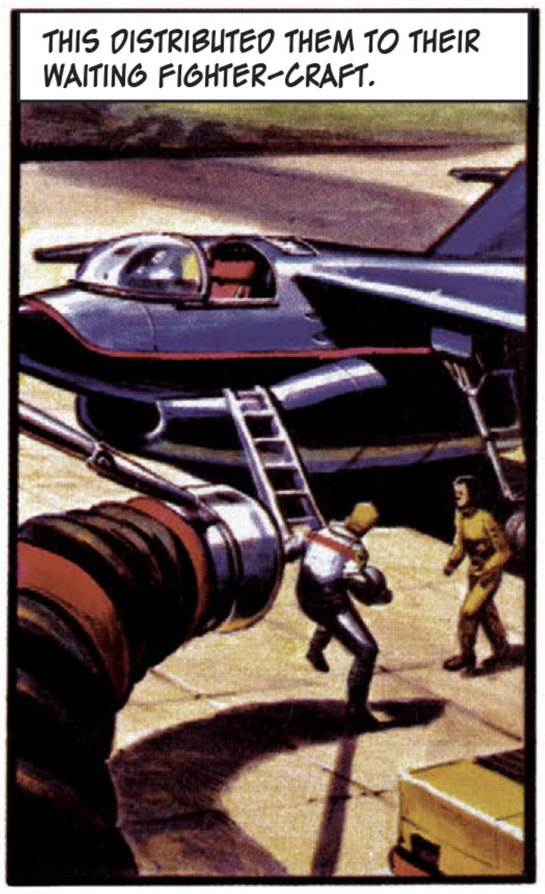
THE MAIN STREET WAS TOO NARROW TO ACCOMMODATE THE DIGGER – SO THE DIGGER TOOK THE STREET WITH IT.

THE TOWN HALL WAS THE PRIDE OF THE PROVINCE. IT FELL LIKE A HOUSE OF SAND.

IN TRIGAN CITY AIR FLEET HEAD-QUARTERS, THE DUTY PILOTS PASSED THE TIME IDLY.
WE'RE OFF DUTY TOMORROW. WHAT ABOUT GOING DOWN TO THE COAST FOR A SWIM?
GOOD IDEA, JANNO.
RIGHT!

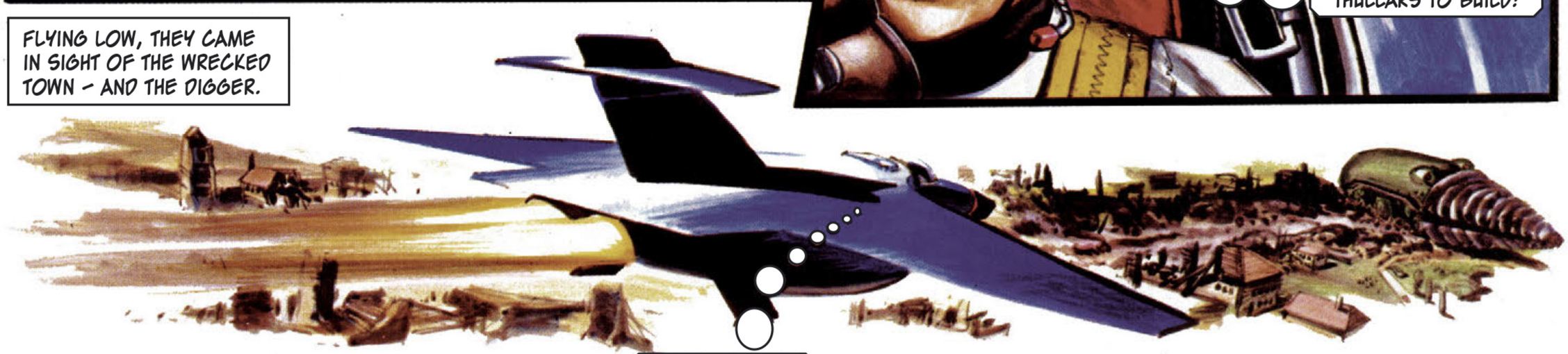
AND THEN...
ALARM! ALARM! DUTY FIGHTERS AIRBORNE. THIS IS NOT A EXERCISE. THIS IS A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

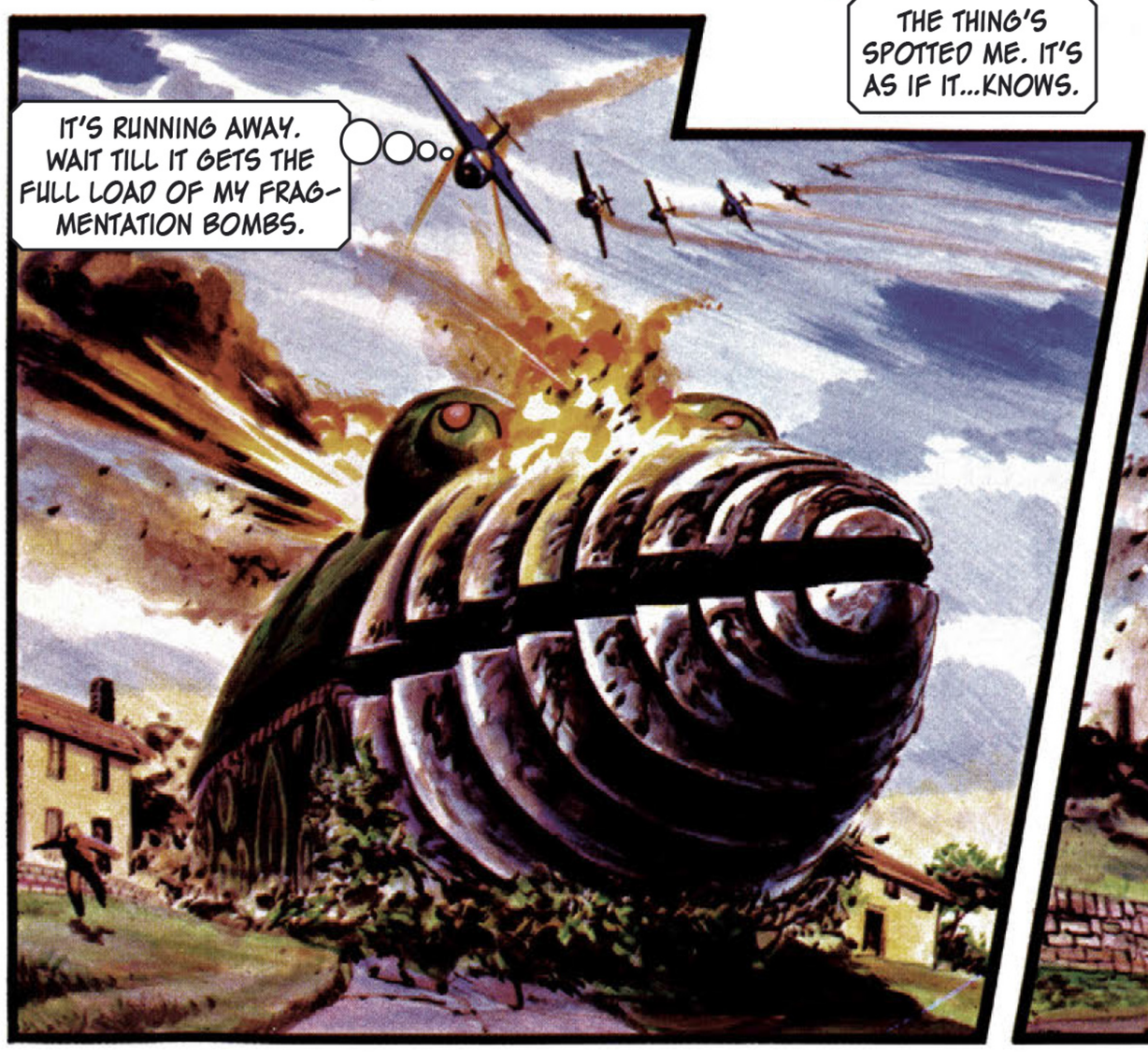
SNATCHING UP THEIR HELMETS, JANNO AND HIS COMRADES DIVED INTO THE DISPERSAL TUBE.

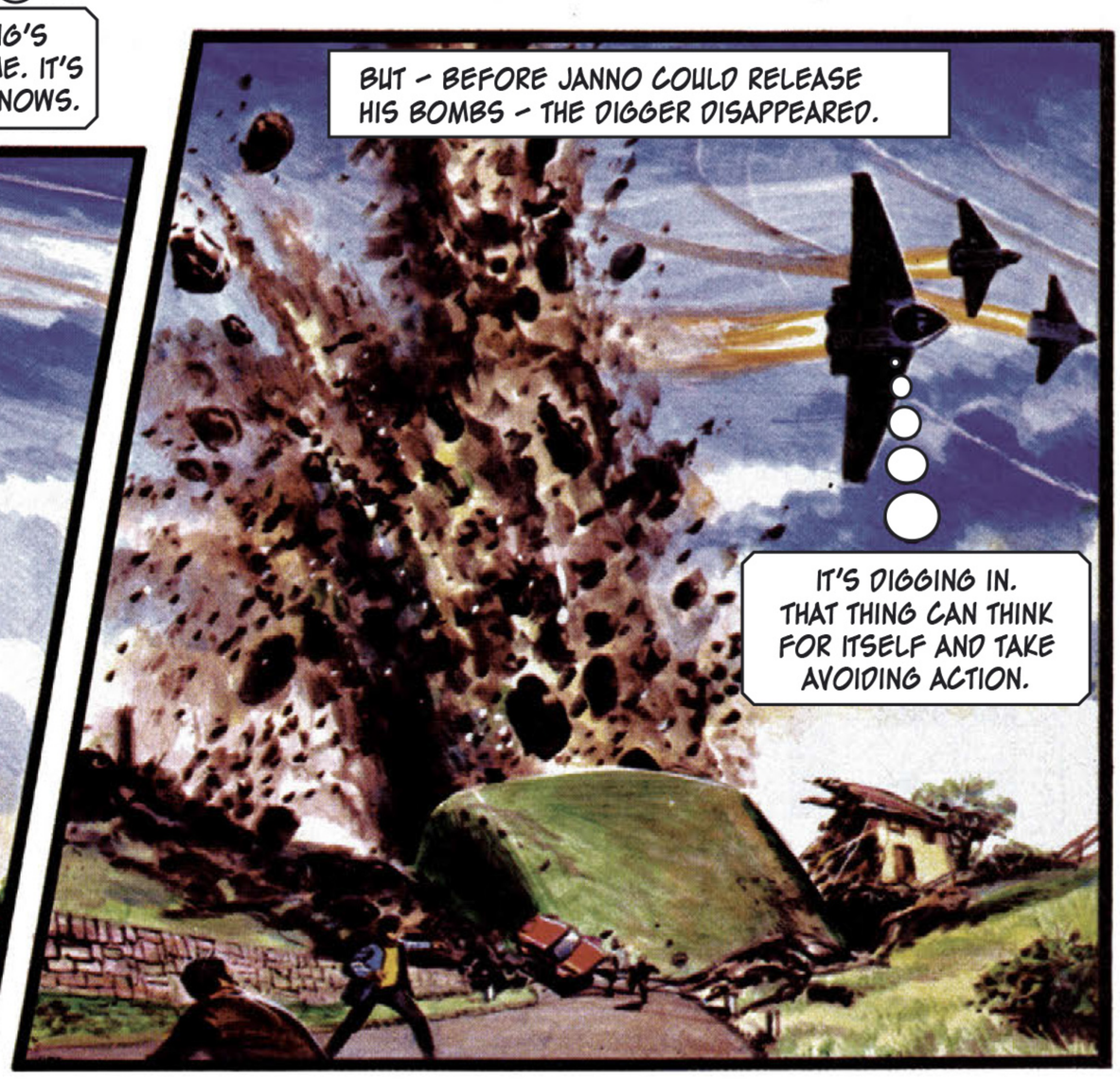

THIS DISTRIBUTED THEM TO THEIR WAITING FIGHTER-CRAFT.

THEY WERE INSTANTLY AIRBORNE.
TAKE LINE FORMATION BEHIND ME.

JANNO, IN THE LEAD CRAFT, LISTENED IN ASTONISHMENT TO HIS INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE CONTROL TOWER.
THE DIGGER HAS RUN AMOK. IT IS ON A RAMPAGE IF DESTRUCTION IN THE TOWN OF CHIZZ. ATTACK AND DESTROY IT IMMEDIATELY.
DESTROY THE DIGGER? BUT THAT THING COST OVER TEN MILLION THULLARS TO BUILD!


FLYING LOW, THEY CAME IN SIGHT OF THE WRECKED TOWN - AND THE DIGGER.
THE THING'S SPOTTED ME. IT'S AS IF IT...KNOWS.


IT'S RUNNING AWAY. WAIT TILL IT GETS THE FULL LOAD OF MY FRAG-MENTATION BOMBS.


BUT - BEFORE JANNO COULD RELEASE HIS BOMBS - THE DIGGER DISAPPEARED.
IT'S DIGGING IN. THAT THING CAN THINK FOR ITSELF AND TAKE AVOIDING ACTION.

SOME DISTANCE FROM TRIGAN CITY, THE GREAT STATE HIGHWAY INTERSECTION WAS AS BUSY AS EVER. SUDDENLY, A SOUND ROSE ABOVE THE ROAR OF TRAFFIC – AND THE DIGGER APPEARED!

DRILL HEAD SPINNING, THE GIANT DESTROYER WENT FOR ONE OF THE MASSIVE SUPPORTS.

BY ALL THE STARS! LOOK DOWN THERE!

WHAT IS IT?

THEN – DISASTER!

AAAAAAGH!!

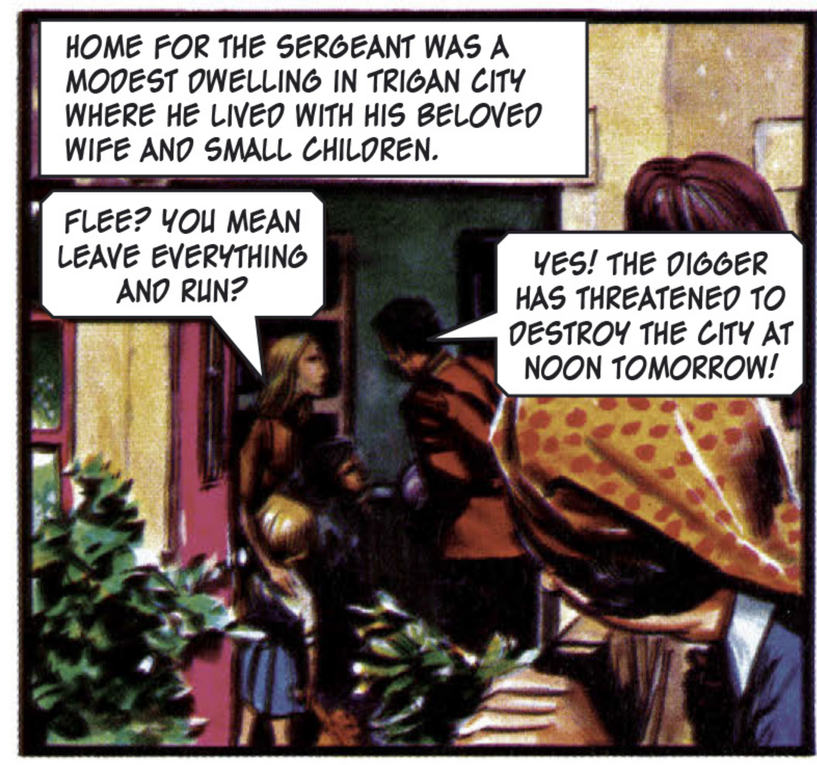
'VORG SWORDSMAN', THE FLAGSHIP OF THE TRIGAN HIGH SEAS FLEET, LAY IN DRY DOCK HAVING A DAMAGED PLATE REPLACED.

SUDDENLY, THE DOCK GATE WAS PUNCHED IN AS IF BY A MIGHTY FIST!

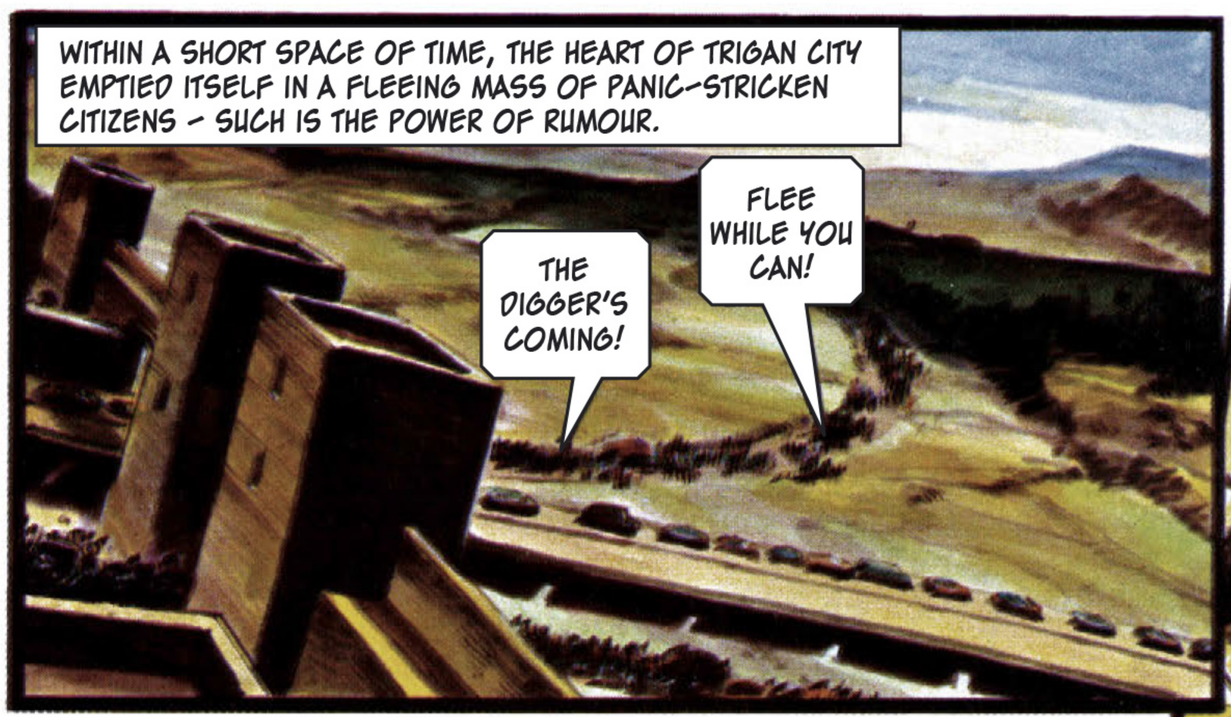
SWAMPED IN AN OVERWHELMING INUNDATION OF POUNDING WATER, THE GIANT WARSHIP WAS A TOTAL WRECK WITHIN MOMENTS!
AS THE EMPEROR TRIGO SAID, AT A HASTILY ASSEMBLED MEETING OF THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL...
THAT MONSTROSITY IS ENGAGED UPON AN ORGY OF APPARENTLY POINTLESS DESTRUCTION! IS THERE NOTHING WE CAN DO TO STOP IT..? PERIC?
PERIC, THE GREAT SCIENTIST, REPLIED...
IT IS CLEAR, FROM OUR ENQUIRIES, THAT THE DIGGER'S ELECTRONIC BRAIN WAS TAMPERED WITH. EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF A VENGEFUL ASSISTANT ENGINEER NAMED ROLLAH...
THE EMPEROR'S BROTHER INTERJECTED WITH AN ANGRY ORDER...
HAVE ROLLAH PUNISHED WITH THE FULL SEVERITY OF THE LAW!
ROLLAH HAS ALREADY PAID THE PRICE, LORD BRAG. HE WAS THE DIGGER'S FIRST VICTIM!
IT WAS THAT EVENING THAT PEOPLE SWITCHED ON TO TRIGAN CITY TELE-STATION...
THE DIGGER CONTINUES ITS TRAIL OF TERROR...
...COMPLAINED OF A STRANGE INTERFERENCE.
...THROUGHOUT THE TRIGAN CITY AREA.
PERIC WAS THE FIRST TO REALISE THE CAUSE.
THAT SERIES OF LINES AND DOTS HAS A REGULAR PATTERN! IT IS ALMOST LIKE - SOME SORT OF REPEATED MESSAGE!
THE MESSAGE, WHEN TRANSLATED INTO THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF THE PLANET ELEKTON, WAS READ ALOUD...
I HAVE IT! THE LINES AND DOTS BEAR A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP TO THE LETTERS OF THE ELEKTON ALPHABET.
IT IS FROM THE DIGGER..!
AND IT'S... IT'S...
A DEMAND!

IN A REMOTE VALLEY IN THE VORG MOUNTAINS, INTO WHICH IT HAD PUNCHED ITS WAY, THE DIGGER LAY SILENT AND SAFE – WAITING – WAITING...
...WHILE IN THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL CHAMBER, PERIC WAS DELIVERING THE MECHANICAL MONSTER'S OUTRAGEOUS DEMAND.
TRANSLATED INTO ELEKTON, THE DIGGER'S MESSAGE IS THIS: "YOU WILL SUPPLY ME WITH ENOUGH RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL TO EXIST INDEFINITELY, OR I WILL DESTROY YOUR CITY..."
THE CLOSE OF THE MESSAGE SENT A THRILL OF HORROR THROUGH THE GREAT SCIENTIST'S AUDIENCE.
"YOU HAVE TILL NOON TOMORROW TO DECIDE. IF YOUR ANSWER IS IN THE NEGATIVE, THERE WILL NOT BE ONE STONE STANDING ON ANOTHER IN WHAT WAS TRIGAN CITY!"
WHAT INFERNAL FOOL DESIGNED A MACHINE THAT COULD DO THIS?
IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THE DIGGER WAS DESIGNED TO BE PERFECTLY SAFE. ITS BRAIN WAS TAMPERED WITH, AND NOW THAT BRAIN IS DEVELOPING! THE DIGGER CAN NOW REASON FOR ITSELF!
THE AWFULNESS OF THEIR DILEMMA STRUCK THEM LIKE THE KNELL OF DOOM.
THEN WE MUST WITHHOLD THE RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL, WITHOUT WHICH IT MUST SOON GRIND TO A HALT AND BE HARMLESS!
IT WILL NOT GRIND TO A HALT BEFORE NOON TOMORROW, SIRE!

WHILE THE EMPEROR AND HIS COUNCIL WERE DEBATING THE DECISION, A SERGEANT OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD DESERTED HIS POST, UNSEEN.
I MUST GET BACK HOME - QUICKLY!

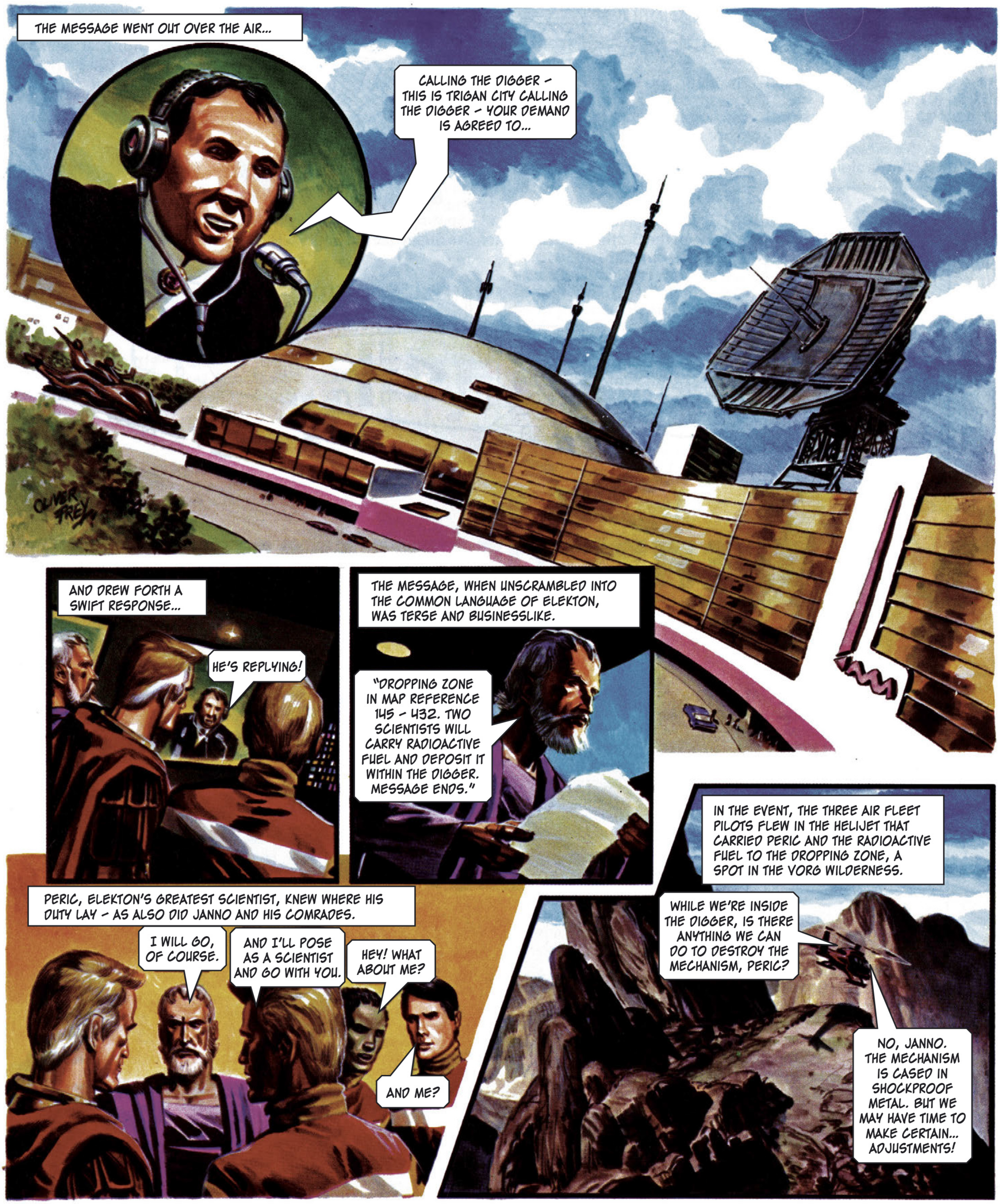

HOME FOR THE SERGEANT WAS A MODEST DWELLING IN TRIGAN CITY WHERE HE LIVED WITH HIS BELOVED WIFE AND SMALL CHILDREN.
FLEE? YOU MEAN LEAVE EVERYTHING AND RUN?
YES! THE DIGGER HAS THREATENED TO DESTROY THE CITY AT NOON TOMORROW!

AN EAVESDROPPING NEIGHBOUR OVERHEARD THE SERGEANT...
AYEEEEE! THE DIGGER'S COMING TO DESTROY THE CITY AND US WITH IT!


WITHIN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME, THE HEART OF TRIGAN CITY EMPTIED ITSELF IN A FLEEING MASS OF PANIC-STRICKEN CITIZENS - SUCH IS THE POWER OF RUMOUR.
THE DIGGER'S COMING!
FLEE WHILE YOU CAN!

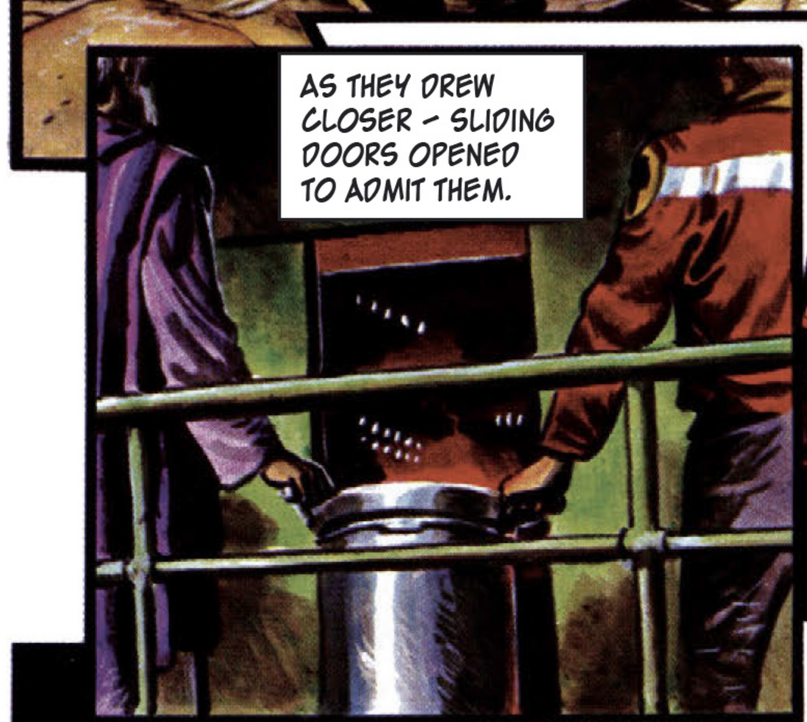
IN NO TIME AT ALL, INTO THE EMPTY CITY CAME - LOOTERS!

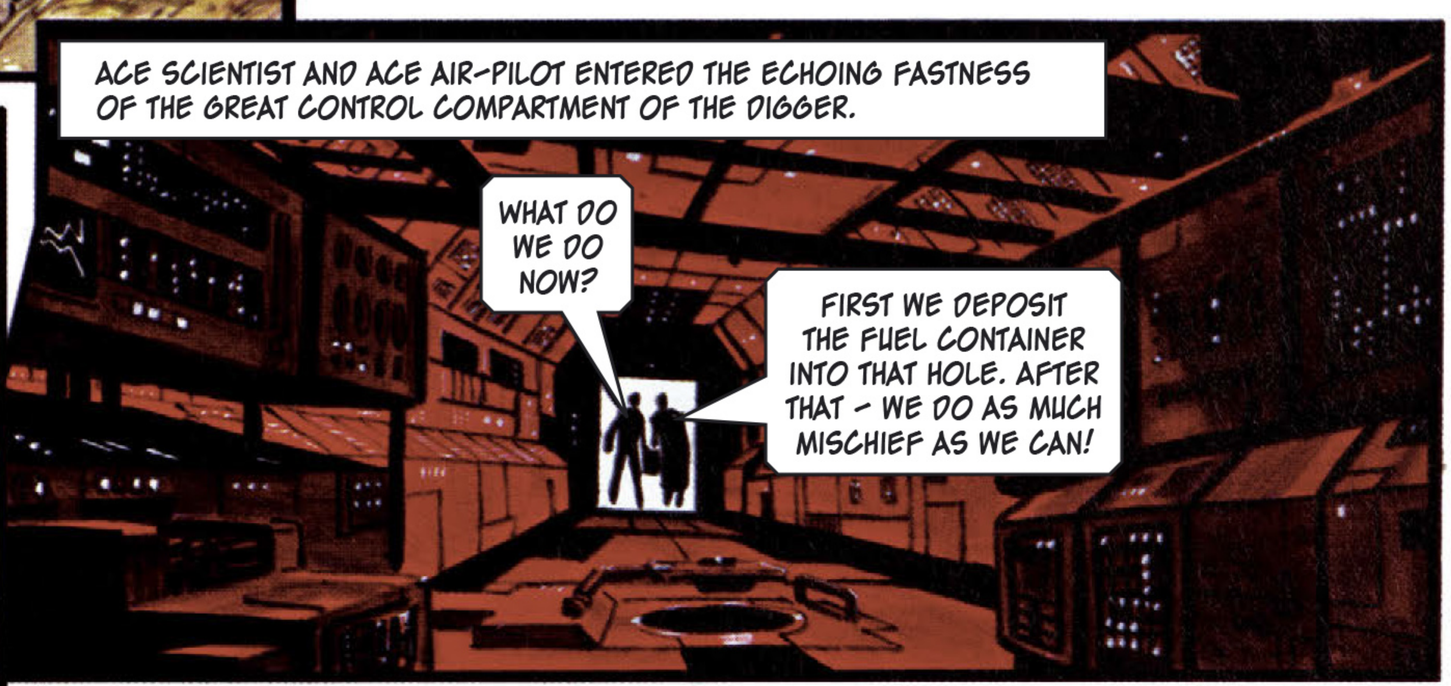
STREET BATTLES RAGED BETWEEN LOOTERS AND CITY POLICE.
TRIGO CAME TO HIS DECISION...
WE WILL GIVE THE DIGGER WHAT HE DEMANDS!
FIRES BROKE OUT ALL OVER THE METROPOLIS. FROM THE BALCONY OF HIS IMPERIAL PALACE, TRIGO LOOKED OUT OVER THE SCENE OF DESTRUCTION.
THE POLICE CAN'T HOLD THE SITUATION! THE LOOTERS ARE WINNING, BROTHER! ONLY ONE THING CAN SAVE THE CITY - THE PEOPLE MUST BE INDUCED TO COME BACK AND GUARD THEIR PROPERTY!
ALMOST UNNOTICED, WHEN SPEAKING OF THE DIGGER, "IT" HAD BECOME "HE"!

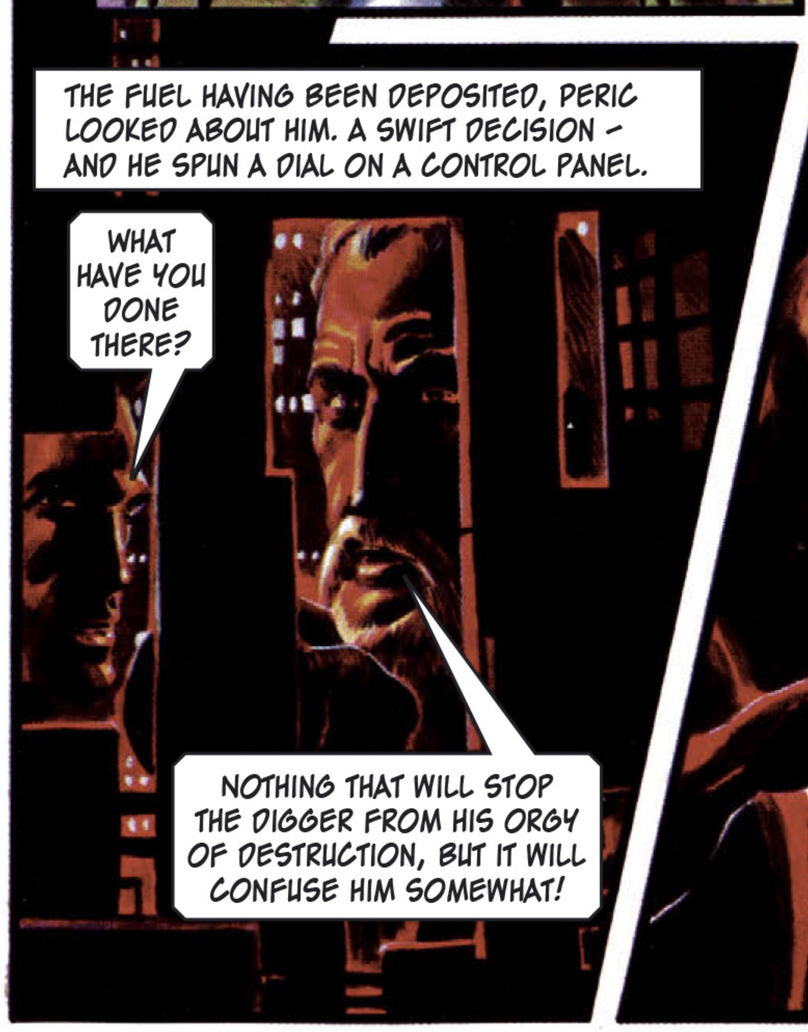

THE MESSAGE WENT OUT OVER THE AIR...
CALLING THE DIGGER – THIS IS TRIGAN CITY CALLING THE DIGGER – YOUR DEMAND IS AGREED TO...
OLIVER FREY
AND DREW FORTH A SWIFT RESPONSE...
HE'S REPLYING!
THE MESSAGE, WHEN UNSCRAMBLED INTO THE COMMON LANGUAGE OF ELEKTON, WAS TERSE AND BUSINESSLIKE.
"DROPPING ZONE IN MAP REFERENCE 145 – 432. TWO SCIENTISTS WILL CARRY RADIOACTIVE FUEL AND DEPOSIT IT WITHIN THE DIGGER. MESSAGE ENDS."
PERIC, ELEKTON'S GREATEST SCIENTIST, KNEW WHERE HIS DUTY LAY – AS ALSO DID JANNO AND HIS COMRADES.
I WILL GO, OF COURSE.
AND I'LL POSE AS A SCIENTIST AND GO WITH YOU.
HEY! WHAT ABOUT ME?
AND ME?
IN THE EVENT, THE THREE AIR FLEET PILOTS FLEW IN THE HELIJET THAT CARRIED PERIC AND THE RADIOACTIVE FUEL TO THE DROPPING ZONE, A SPOT IN THE VORG WILDERNESS.
WHILE WE'RE INSIDE THE DIGGER, IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO DESTROY THE MECHANISM, PERIC?
NO, JANNO. THE MECHANISM IS CASED IN SHOCKPROOF METAL. BUT WE MAY HAVE TIME TO MAKE CERTAIN... ADJUSTMENTS!

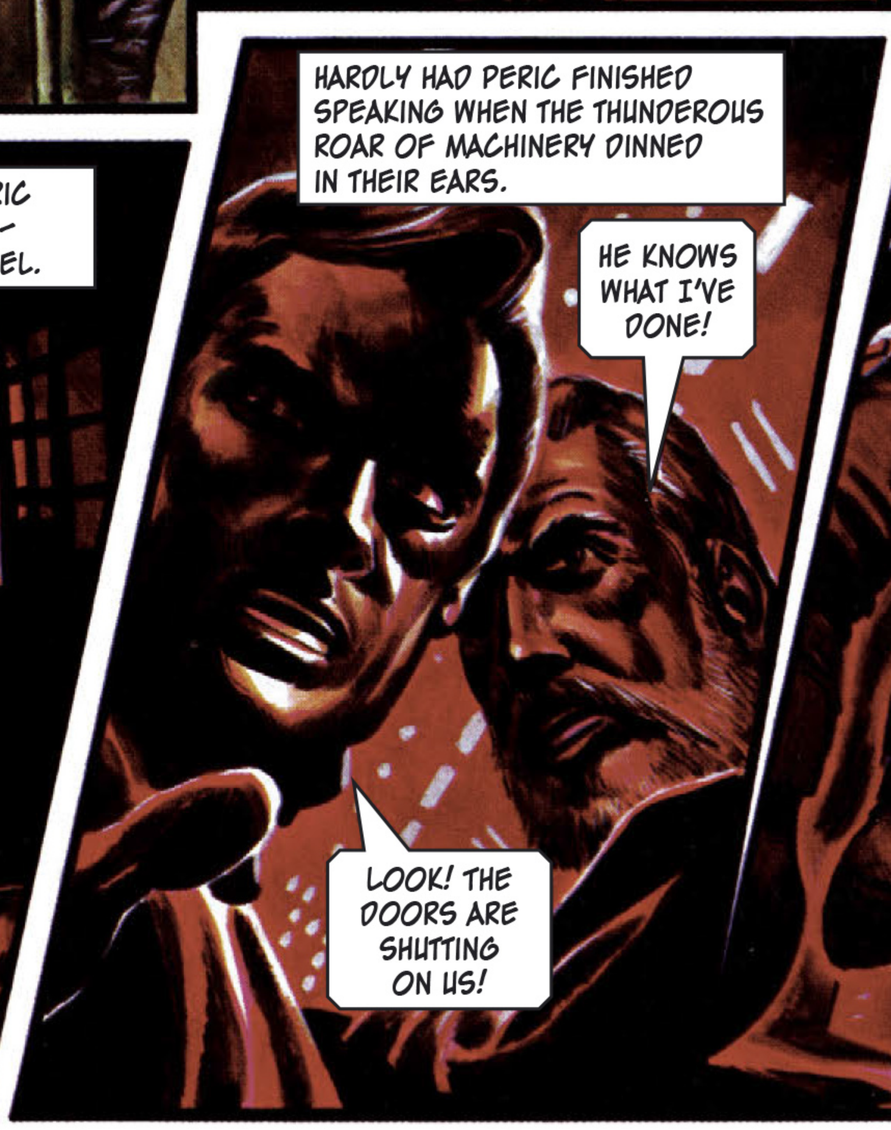
OVER THE DROPPING ZONE, THEY HOVERED FOR SOME TIME. AND THEN – IT HAPPENED!
THERE HE IS!

KEREN BROUGHT THE CRAFT DOWN, AND PERIC AND JANNO GOT OUT WITH THE CONTAINER OF FUEL – CONSCIOUS THAT THE 'EYES' OF THE DIGGER WERE UPON THEM.


AS THEY DREW CLOSER – SLIDING DOORS OPENED TO ADMIT THEM.


ACE SCIENTIST AND ACE AIR-PILOT ENTERED THE ECHOING FASTNESS OF THE GREAT CONTROL COMPARTMENT OF THE DIGGER.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
FIRST WE DEPOSIT THE FUEL CONTAINER INTO THAT HOLE. AFTER THAT – WE DO AS MUCH MISCHIEF AS WE CAN!


THE FUEL HAVING BEEN DEPOSITED, PERIC LOOKED ABOUT HIM. A SWIFT DECISION – AND HE SPUN A DIAL ON A CONTROL PANEL.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE THERE?
NOTHING THAT WILL STOP THE DIGGER FROM HIS ORGY OF DESTRUCTION, BUT IT WILL CONFUSE HIM SOMEWHAT!


HARDLY HAD PERIC FINISHED SPEAKING WHEN THE THUNDEROUS ROAR OF MACHINERY DINNED IN THEIR EARS.
HE KNOWS WHAT I'VE DONE!
LOOK! THE DOORS ARE SHUTTING ON US!

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE! OR WE'RE TRAPPED IN HERE!

JANNO PUSHED PERIC IN THE SMALL OF THE BACK – AND THE GREAT SCIENTIST HURTLED THROUGH THE CLOSING DOORS WITH AN INSTANT TO SPARE.
AAAAAAAAH!

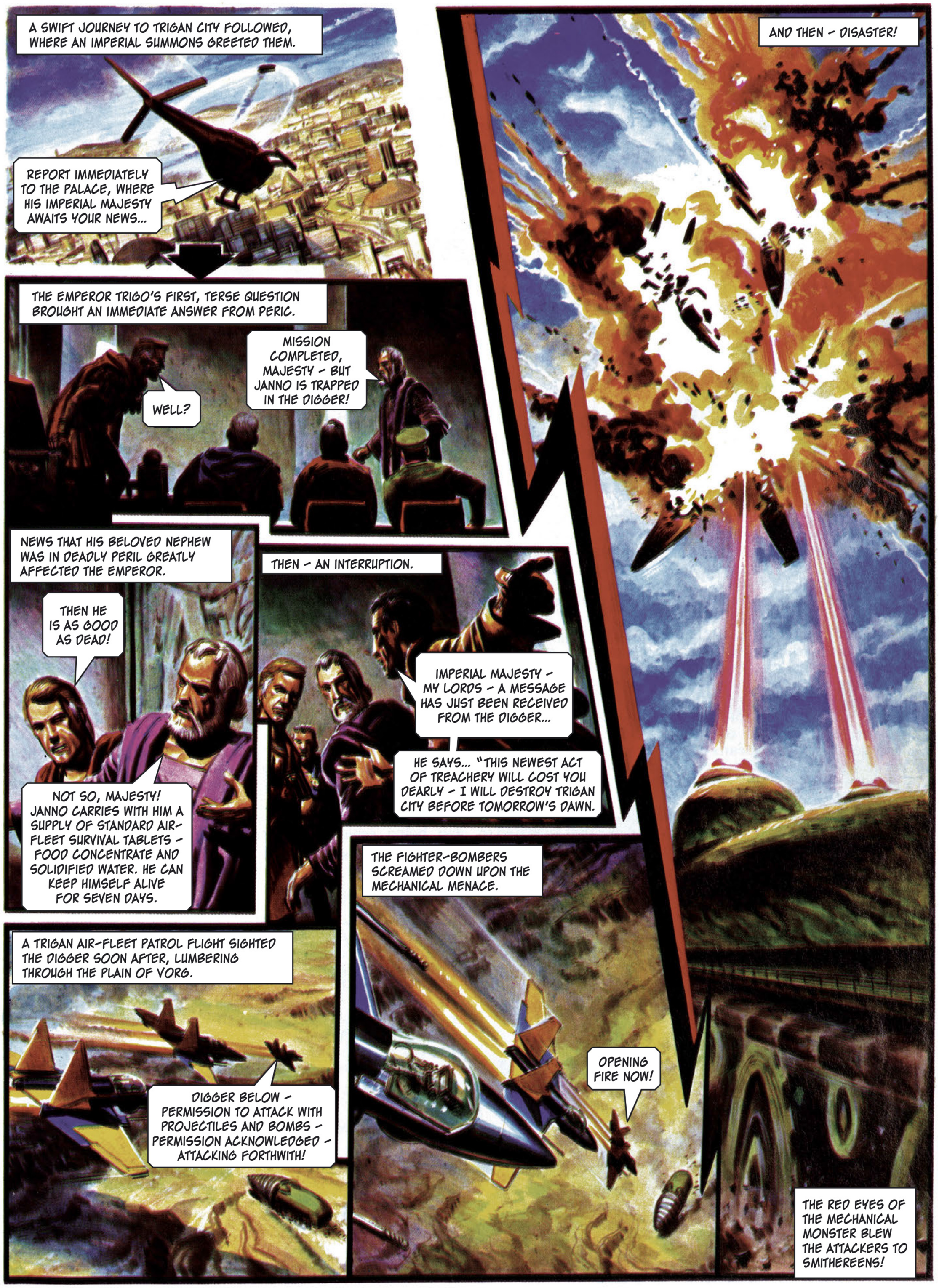
TOO LATE! THE DOORS SLAMMED SHUT ON THE GALLANT AIR-FLEET PILOT!

HE LOOKED ABOUT HIM IN ANGUISH.
I'M TRAPPED IN HERE!
AH! THIS THING'S MOVING!
WHAT ABOUT PERIC?

IN A STATE OF NEAR-COLLAPSE, THE OLD SCIENTIST WAS GRABBED BY THE ARM – AND ROFFA SHOUTED AN ORDER.
TAKE HER UP, KEREN – OR WE'RE DONE FOR!

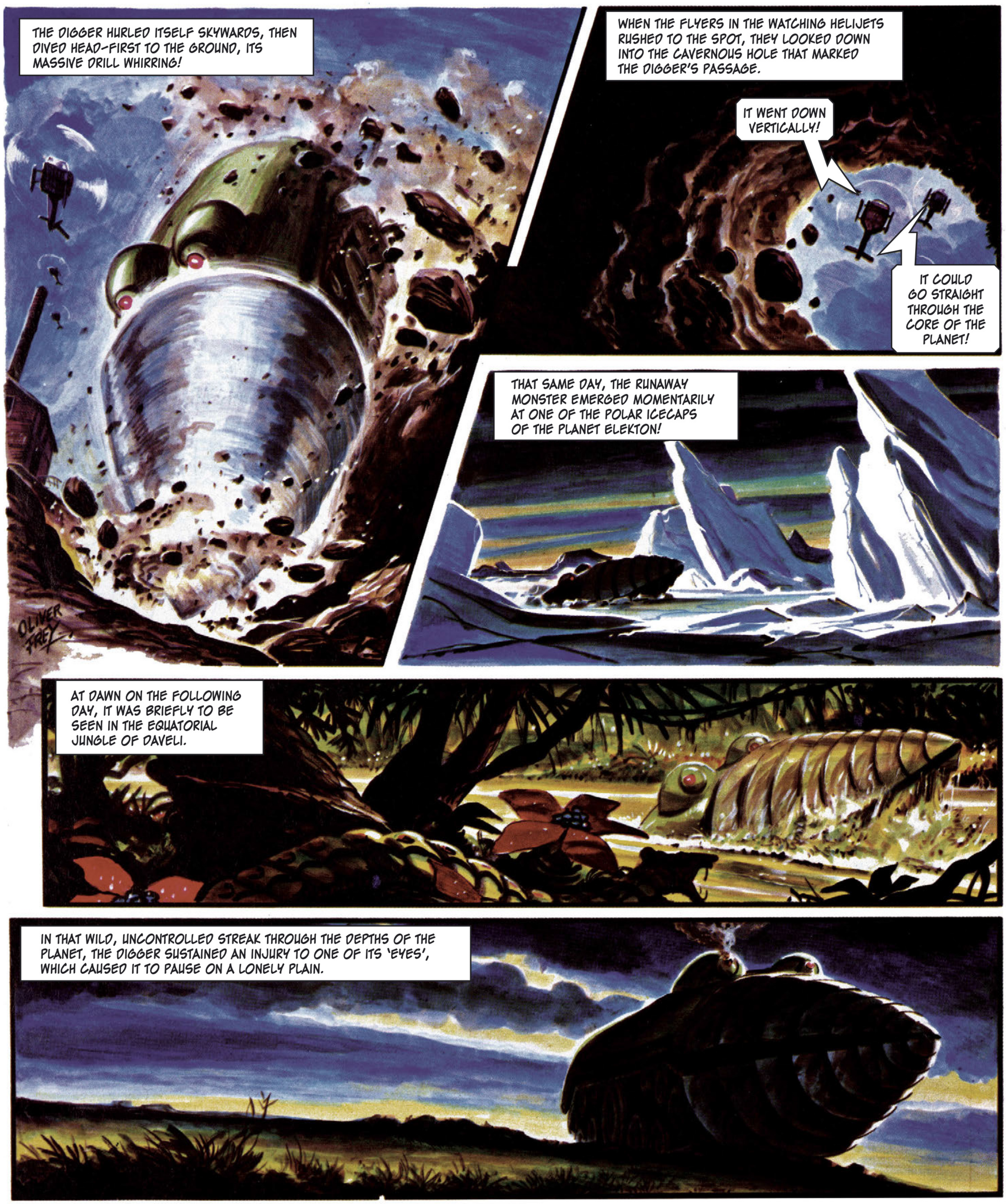
THE HELIJET ROSE SKYWARD – AND THE DIGGER MISSED IT BY A HAIRSBREADTH.

AT THAT MOMENT, PERIC WAS FLEEING FOR HIS LIFE, WITH THE DIGGER ON HIS HEELS!
AAAAH! AAAAH! AAAAH!

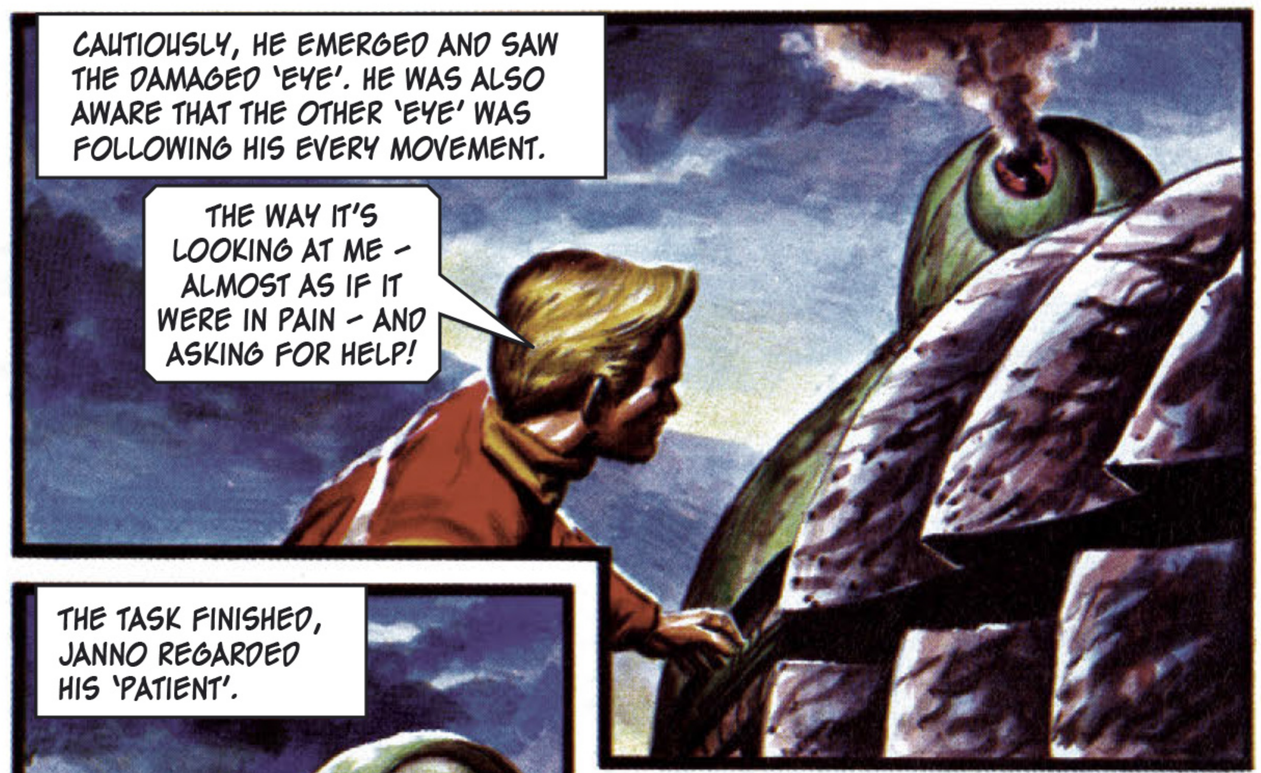

A SWIFT JOURNEY TO TRIGAN CITY FOLLOWED, WHERE AN IMPERIAL SUMMONS GREETED THEM.
REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE PALACE, WHERE HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AWAITS YOUR NEWS...
THE EMPEROR TRIGO'S FIRST, TERSE QUESTION BROUGHT AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER FROM PERIC.
WELL?
MISSION COMPLETED, MAJESTY – BUT JANNO IS TRAPPED IN THE DIGGER!
NEWS THAT HIS BELOVED NEPHEW WAS IN DEADLY PERIL GREATLY AFFECTED THE EMPEROR.
THEN HE IS AS GOOD AS DEAD!
NOT SO, MAJESTY! JANNO CARRIES WITH HIM A SUPPLY OF STANDARD AIR-FLEET SURVIVAL TABLETS – FOOD CONCENTRATE AND SOLIDIFIED WATER. HE CAN KEEP HIMSELF ALIVE FOR SEVEN DAYS.
THEN – AN INTERRUPTION.
IMPERIAL MAJESTY – MY LORDS – A MESSAGE HAS JUST BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE DIGGER...
HE SAYS... "THIS NEWEST ACT OF TREACHERY WILL COST YOU DEARLY – I WILL DESTROY TRIGAN CITY BEFORE TOMORROW'S DAWN.
A TRIGAN AIR-FLEET PATROL FLIGHT SIGHTED THE DIGGER SOON AFTER, LUMBERING THROUGH THE PLAIN OF VORG.
DIGGER BELOW – PERMISSION TO ATTACK WITH PROJECTILES AND BOMBS – PERMISSION ACKNOWLEDGED – ATTACKING FORTHWITH!
THE FIGHTER-BOMBERS SCREAMED DOWN UPON THE MECHANICAL MENACE.
OPENING FIRE NOW!
AND THEN – DISASTER!
THE RED EYES OF THE MECHANICAL MONSTER BLEW THE ATTACKERS TO SMITHEREENS!

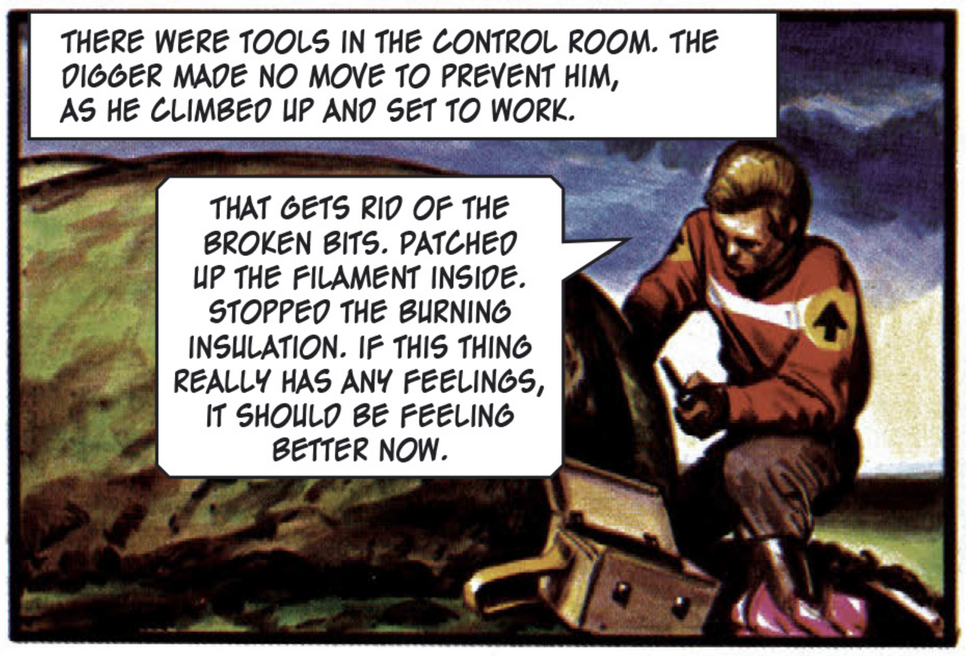
A BURST OF RED HEAT FROM THE BURNING EYES OF THE DIGGER, AND THE LAST CRAFT DISINTEGRATED.
WITH DEBRIS RAINING ALL ROUND IT, THE DIGGER WENT ON ITS WAY.
LATER, BACK IN THE IMPERIAL PALACE IN TRIGAN CITY, THE GREAT SCIENTIST, PERIC, FACED A BARRAGE OF ABUSE FROM THE COUNCIL.
WHAT HAS THE SCIENCE OF THIS PLANET COME TO? WHAT MADMAN DESIGNED THAT MONSTER, WITH A DESTRUCTIVE BEAM THAT CAN BLOT AIRCRAFT OUT OF EXISTENCE?
PERIC ANSWERED CALMLY...
CORRECTION, LORD BRAG. THE DESTRUCTIVE BEAM WAS NOT ORIGINALLY BUILT INTO THE DIGGER'S SYSTEM.
THEN HOW, BY ALL THE STARS, DID THIS THING COME ABOUT?
PERIC'S ANSWER SENT A CHILL THROUGH THE VEINS OF ALL PRESENT.
IT HAS COME ABOUT BECAUSE OF NECESSITY ON THE PART OF THE DIGGER. THE THING IS DEVELOPING SPECIAL CAPABILITIES OF ITS OWN.
AND THIS MONSTER IS EVEN NOW HEADING FOR THE CITY.
TO DESTROY US ALL!
PERHAPS NOT. WHILE INSIDE THE DIGGER, I WAS ABLE TO MAKE A HASTY ADJUSTMENT TO ITS NAVIGATIONAL DIRECTION INDICATOR. IT MAY WELL BE THAT IT MAY NEVER FIND TRIGAN CITY!

LATER THAT DAY, THE DIGGER APPROACHED AN ABANDONED MINEWORKING COMPLEX SOME DISTANCE FROM THE CAPITAL. WATCHED BY OBSERVERS IN HOVERING HELI-JETS, IT SWERVED TOWARDS THE MASS OF DERELICT BUILDINGS.
THE DIGGER HAS JUST MADE A MINOR ADJUSTMENT OF COURSE AND IS HEADING FOR THE OLD MINE.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
PERIC, IN ONE OF THE SHADOWING CRAFT, GAVE A CRY OF TRIUMPH...
IT WORKED! MY INTERFERENCE WITH ITS NAVIGATIONAL DIRECTION INDICATOR HAS COMPLETELY THROWN IT OFF COURSE. IT THINKS THAT THE OLD MINE COMPLEX IS TRIGAN CITY.
KEREN, ROFFA AND THE OLD SCIENTIST LOOKED DOWN IN AWE.
BY ALL THE STARS. LOOK WHAT IT'S DOING!
IMAGINE - THAT COULD HAVE BEEN TRIGAN CITY!
A VERITABLE ORGY OF DESTRUCTION!
IN THE ECHOING FASTNESS WITHIN THE CAREERING MONSTER, ITS PRISONER JANNO COULD ONLY HANG ON - AND HOPE.
WHAT'S IT DOING NOW..?
DESTROYING TRIGAN CITY?
CLAWING HIS WAY ACROSS THE BUCKING CONTROL COMPARTMENT, JANNO SEIZED HOLD OF A CONTROL LEVER - ANY CONTROL LEVER - AND PULLED.
IT MAY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD, BUT...
NEXT INSTANT, HIS WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN!
EEEEEEEEGHH!

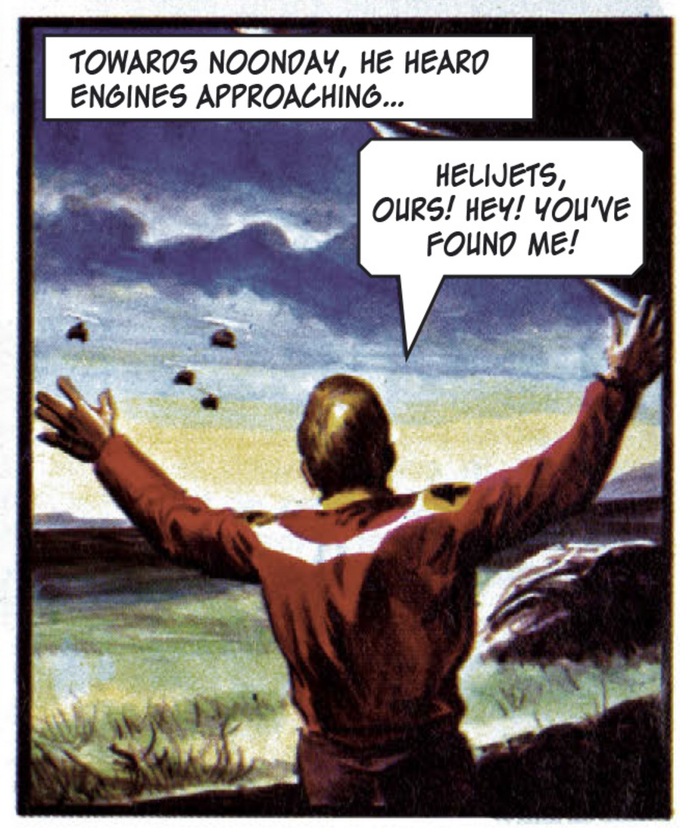

THE DIGGER HURLED ITSELF SKYWARDS, THEN DIVED HEAD-FIRST TO THE GROUND, ITS MASSIVE DRILL WHIRRING!
WHEN THE FLYERS IN THE WATCHING HELIJETS RUSHED TO THE SPOT, THEY LOOKED DOWN INTO THE CAVERNOUS HOLE THAT MARKED THE DIGGER'S PASSAGE.
IT WENT DOWN VERTICALLY!
IT COULD GO STRAIGHT THROUGH THE CORE OF THE PLANET!
THAT SAME DAY, THE RUNAWAY MONSTER EMERGED MOMENTARILY AT ONE OF THE POLAR ICECAPS OF THE PLANET ELEKTON!
OLIVER FREY
AT DAWN ON THE FOLLOWING DAY, IT WAS BRIEFLY TO BE SEEN IN THE EQUATORIAL JUNGLE OF DAVELI.
IN THAT WILD, UNCONTROLLED STREAK THROUGH THE DEPTHS OF THE PLANET, THE DIGGER SUSTAINED AN INJURY TO ONE OF ITS 'EYES', WHICH CAUSED IT TO PAUSE ON A LONELY PLAIN.

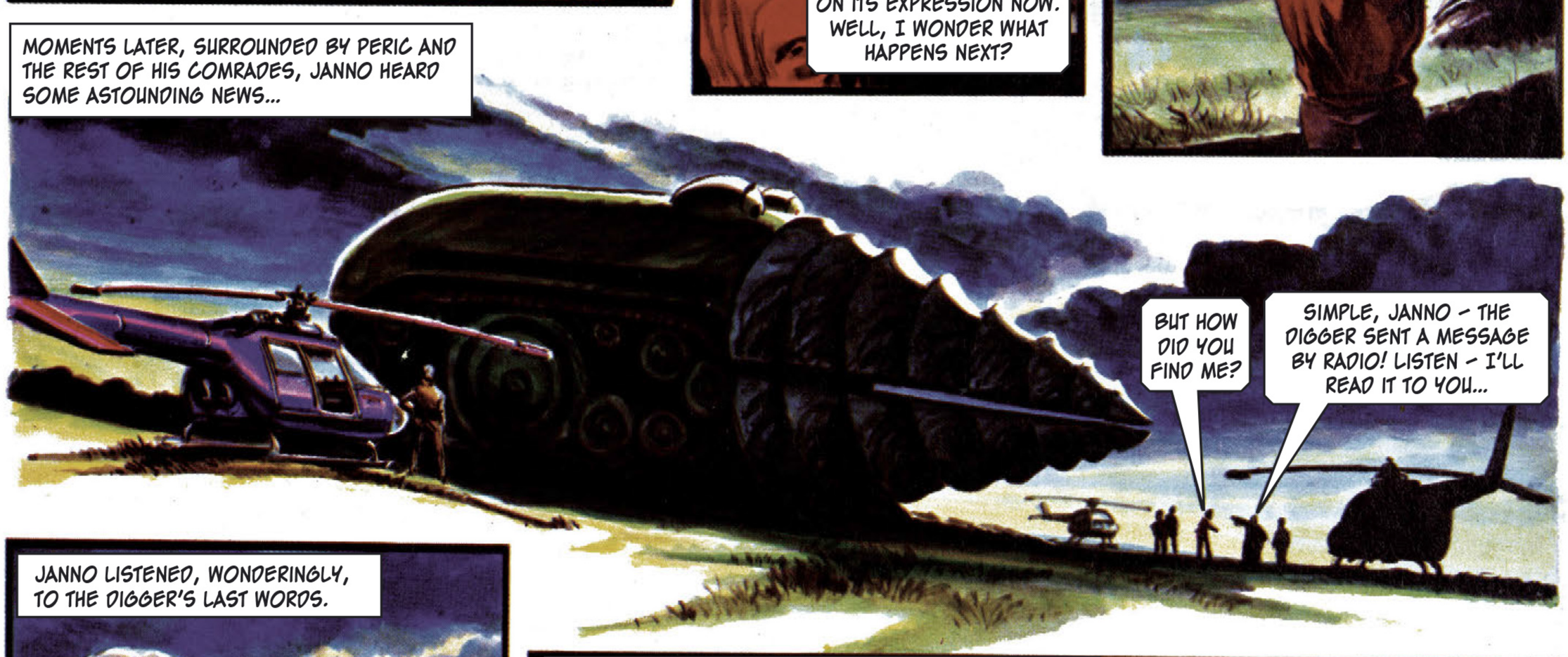
JANNO, WHO HAD SURVIVED HIS NIGHTMARE RIDE BY A NEAR-MIRACLE LOOKED UP TO SEE THE EXIT DOORS GLIDING OPEN.
THE THING IS PERMITTING ME TO GET OUT!
BUT... WHY?

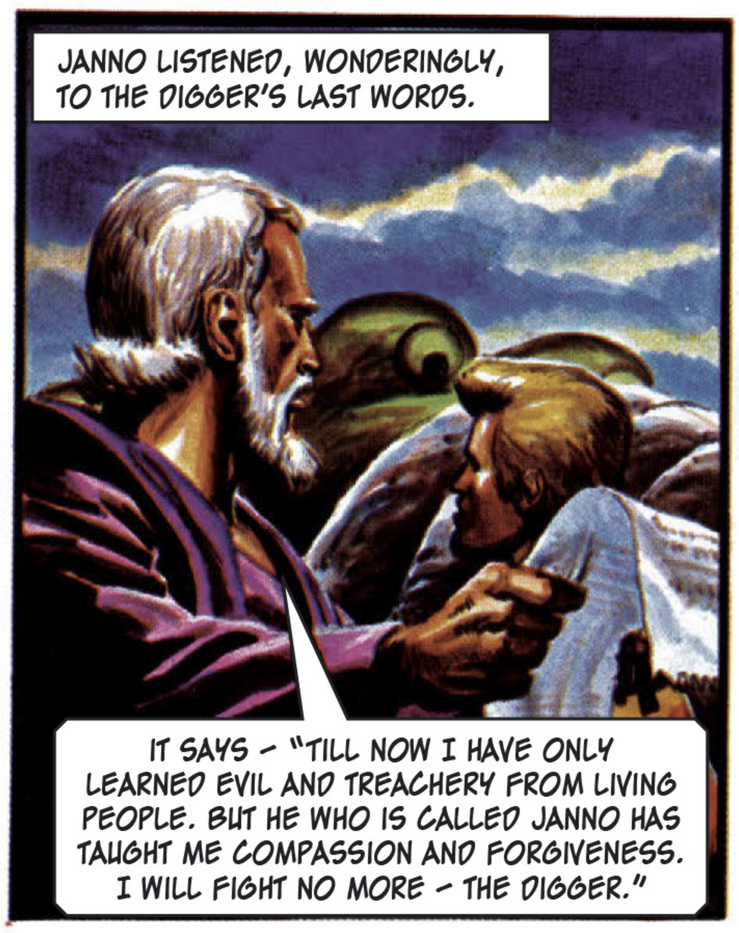

CAUTIOUSLY, HE EMERGED AND SAW THE DAMAGED 'EYE'. HE WAS ALSO AWARE THAT THE OTHER 'EYE' WAS FOLLOWING HIS EVERY MOVEMENT.
THE WAY IT'S LOOKING AT ME – ALMOST AS IF IT WERE IN PAIN – AND ASKING FOR HELP!


THERE WERE TOOLS IN THE CONTROL ROOM. THE DIGGER MADE NO MOVE TO PREVENT HIM, AS HE CLIMBED UP AND SET TO WORK.
THAT GETS RID OF THE BROKEN BITS. PATCHED UP THE FILAMENT INSIDE. STOPPED THE BURNING INSULATION. IF THIS THING REALLY HAS ANY FEELINGS, IT SHOULD BE FEELING BETTER NOW.

THE TASK FINISHED, JANNO REGARDED HIS 'PATIENT'.
THERE'S A DISTINCT LOOK OF BENEVOLENCE ON ITS EXPRESSION NOW. WELL, I WONDER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?


TOWARDS NOONDAY, HE HEARD ENGINES APPROACHING...
HELIJETS, OURS! HEY! YOU'VE FOUND ME!


MOMENTS LATER, SURROUNDED BY PERIC AND THE REST OF HIS COMRADES, JANNO HEARD SOME ASTOUNDING NEWS...
BUT HOW DID YOU FIND ME?
SIMPLE, JANNO – THE DIGGER SENT A MESSAGE BY RADIO! LISTEN – I'LL READ IT TO YOU...


JANNO LISTENED, WONDERINGLY, TO THE DIGGER'S LAST WORDS.
IT SAYS – "TILL NOW I HAVE ONLY LEARNED EVIL AND TREACHERY FROM LIVING PEOPLE. BUT HE WHO IS CALLED JANNO HAS TAUGHT ME COMPASSION AND FORGIVENESS. I WILL FIGHT NO MORE – THE DIGGER."

THE DIGGER – HARMLESS AND STILLED FOR EVER – REMAINS A MONUMENT IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY – A PERPETUAL REMINDER OF THE PERILS THAT CAN COME FROM ALLOWING MACHINERY TO DEVELOP INDEPENDENT THOUGHT.

LXVIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE STOLEN PLANS

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 816 - 819

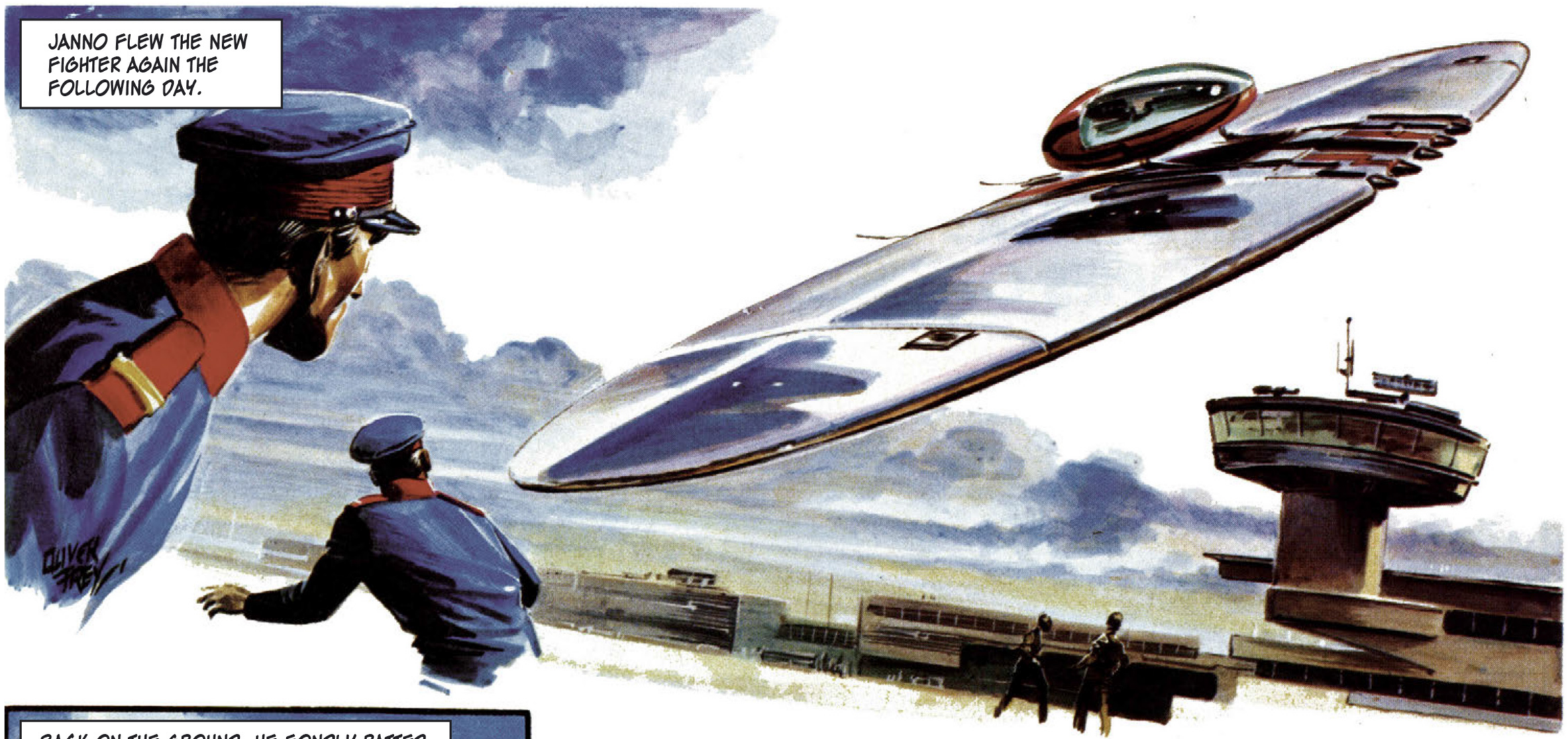
3rd – 24th September 1977

Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Oliver Frey

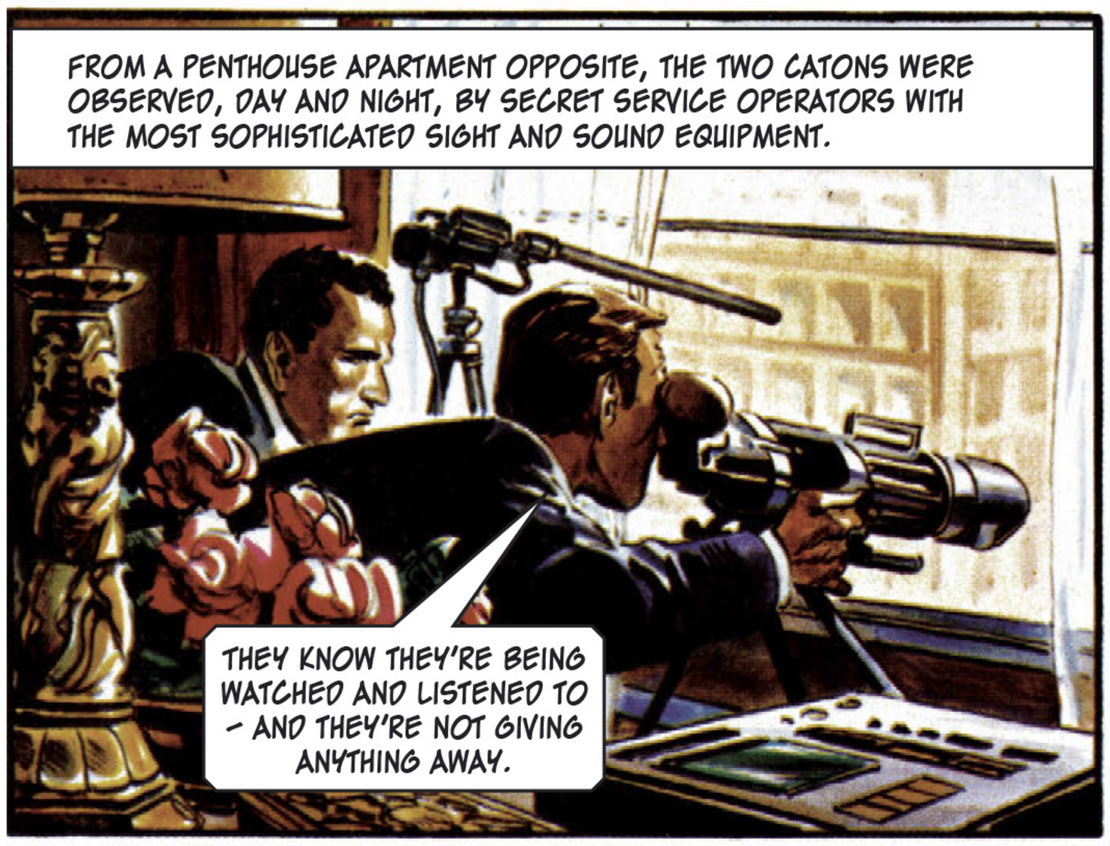
OUT OF THE SKY CAME A SILVERY SHAPE THAT MOVED LIKE LIGHTNING – SWIFT, SILENT, DEADLY.
OLIVER FREY
IT WAS THE OCCASION OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AIR DAY. THE CRAFT – TRIGAN'S NEWEST SECRET FIGHTER – WAS SEEN THERE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
LATER THE PILOT – JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW – WAS PRESENTED TO VISITING DIGNITARIES, INCLUDING THE AIR-ATTACHÉ FROM CATO.
LIEUTENANT JANNO, MEET MARSHAL ZOOTHO OF CATO.
THAT IS A FINE CRAFT YOU HAVE THERE, LIEUTENANT.
YES, SIR. AND I WAS ONLY AT HALF-SPEED.
A SIGNIFICANT GLANCE PASSED BETWEEN MARSHAL ZOOTHO AND HIS AIDE.
THIS WAS NOTICED BY THE SHARP EYES OF THE EMPEROR. TRIGO MURMURED TO HIS BROTHER.
THAT WAS A NASTY SHOCK FOR ZOOTHO. NOW HE KNOWS FOR SURE THAT OUR NEW CRAFT CAN KNOCK ANY OF THEIRS OUT OF THE SKY.
HE WILL HAVE SOME MORE NASTY SHOCKS AWAITING HIM WHEN HE VISITS THE AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS TOMORROW.

THOUGH AT PEACE AT THAT TIME, CATO AND THE TRIGANS WERE HEREDITARY ENEMIES. WHEN MARSHAL ZOOTHO AND HIS AIDE VISITED AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS NEXT DAY, THEY WERE SHOWN SOMETHING OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE'S MIGHT...
THIS IS THE COMPLETE RANGE OF THE TRIGAN FIGHTING CRAFT – ALL OF THEM FASTER AND MORE HEAVILY ARMED THAN ANYTHING ELSE ON THE PLANET.
VERY... IMPRESSIVE!
AT THE END OF THE VISIT, THE CATONS TOOK REFRESHMENT WITH THE TRIGAN AIR CHIEF.
GENTLEMEN – I GIVE YOU A TOAST TO CONTINUED PEACE BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.
TO PEACE!
AND THEN – THE LIGHTS WENT OUT!
WHAT'S HAPPENED?
A POWER FAILURE, I DON'T DOUBT. IT WILL SOON BE PUT RIGHT.
A SHORT TIME PASSED – AND THEN THEY CAME ON AGAIN.
MY APOLOGIES, GENTLEMEN. NOT A VERY GOOD EXAMPLE OF TRIGAN AIR FLEET EFFICIENCY, I FEAR.
THERE IS NO DOUBT IN OUR MINDS ABOUT TRIGAN AIR FLEET EFFICIENCY, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
SOON AFTER HIS VISITORS HAD GONE, THE AIR FLEET CHIEF HAD OCCASION TO OPEN HIS SAFE, WHICH WAS HIDDEN BEHIND A PORTRAIT OF THE EMPEROR.
THE COMBINATION OF THIS SAFE IS REALLY MOST UNBELIEVABLY COMPLICATED. I WOULD SAY UNNECESSARILY COMPLICATED.
AND THEN...
THE PLANS OF THE NEW SECRET FIGHTER – GONE!
INVESTIGATIONS WERE SET AFOOT IMMEDIATELY. CERTAIN CONCLUSIONS WERE REACHED IN COMMITTEE...
THE CATONS TOOK IT, OF COURSE.
WHILE THE LIGHTS WERE OUT.
IF WE ACCUSE MARSHAL ZOOTHO, IT WILL MEAN WAR.
BESIDES – IT WOULD TAKE AN EXPERT TO OPEN THAT SAFE IN THE DARK. ZOOTHO'S NO SAFE BREAKER.
BUT – WHAT ABOUT HIS AIDE?
THE MARSHAL'S AIDE WAS INVESTIGATED – WITH A REMARKABLE RESULT...
THE NAME IS YERRU, BUT THAT'S AN ALIAS...
REAL NAME – BORAFF...
BELIEVED TO BE SERVING TWENTY YEARS IN A CATON GAOL FOR – WAIT FOR IT – SAFE-BREAKING.


JANNO FLEW THE NEW FIGHTER AGAIN THE FOLLOWING DAY.
OLIVER FREY

BACK ON THE GROUND, HE FONDLY PATTED THE CRAFT'S SLEEK FUSELAGE AND COMMENTED BITTERLY.
AND TO THINK THAT THE CATONS WILL BE BUILDING THESE!
YOU CAN BE SURE OF THAT, JANNO. WITH THEIR INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY, THE CATONS WILL HAVE A THOUSAND LIKE IT IN THE AIR WITHIN A LUNAR YEAR!

ODDLY ENOUGH, MARSHAL ZOOTHO THE CATON AIR-ATTACHÉ AND HIS 'AIDE' SEEMED IN NO HURRY TO RETURN HOME AFTER THE AIR SHOW, BUT RELAXED IN A TOP HOTEL – AT THE TRIGAN EMPIRE'S EXPENSE!
I THINK WE'LL STAY TILL THE END OF THE LUNAR MONTH, YERRU, AND MAKE THE MOST OF THIS DELIGHTFUL TRIGAN WEATHER.
YES, SIR.

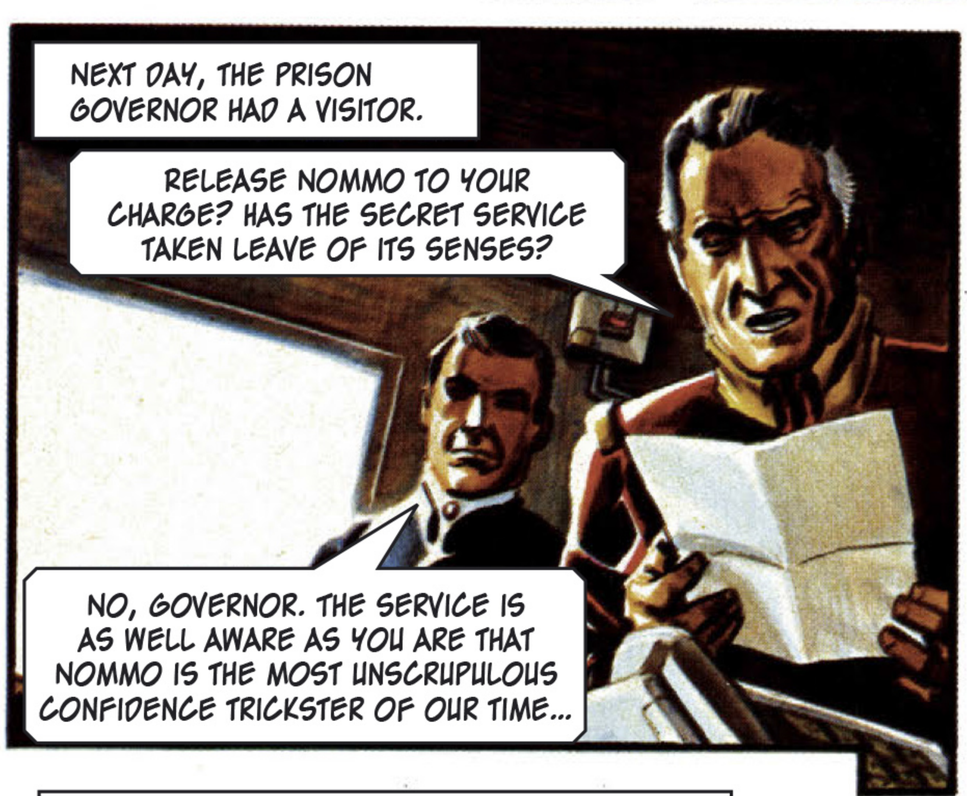

FROM A PENTHOUSE APARTMENT OPPOSITE, THE TWO CATONS WERE OBSERVED, DAY AND NIGHT, BY SECRET SERVICE OPERATORS WITH THE MOST SOPHISTICATED SIGHT AND SOUND EQUIPMENT.
THEY KNOW THEY'RE BEING WATCHED AND LISTENED TO – AND THEY'RE NOT GIVING ANYTHING AWAY.

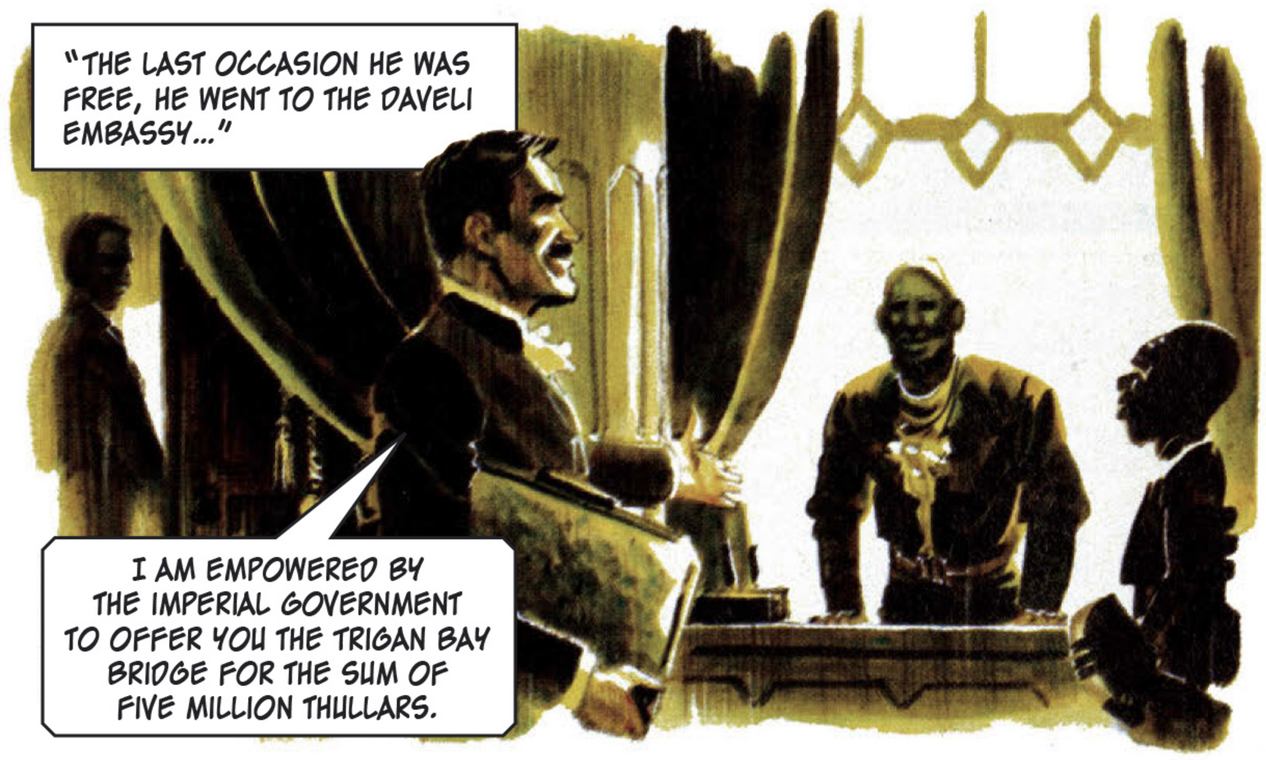
THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL WAS IN CONSTANT SESSION TO MONITOR THE SITUATION.
IN OUR VIEW, ZOOTHO STILL HAS THE PLANS IN HIS POSSESSION, SINCE HE DARE NOT RISK SENDING THEM TO CATO THROUGH THE MAILS. AND HE KNOWS WE DARE NOT CHALLENGE HIM, FOR FEAR OF PRECIPITATING A WAR.

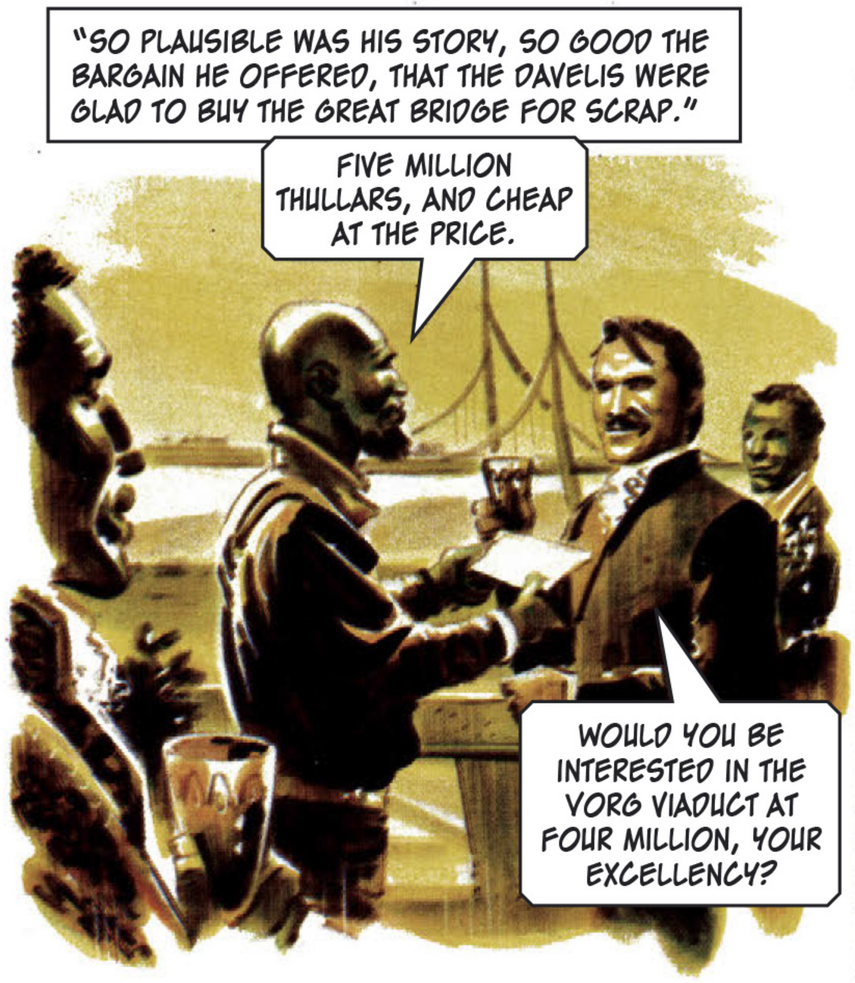
THE EMPEROR SPOKE...
EXCELLENCIES, WE MUST RECOVER THOSE PLANS - AND WE MUST DO SO WITHOUT STARTING A SHOOTING WAR. I AM OPEN TO ANY SUGGESTIONS - HOWEVER FANTASTIC!
SIRE, I HAVE A SUGGESTION, AND IT MIGHT BE REGARDED AS BEING SOMEWHAT FANTASTIC.

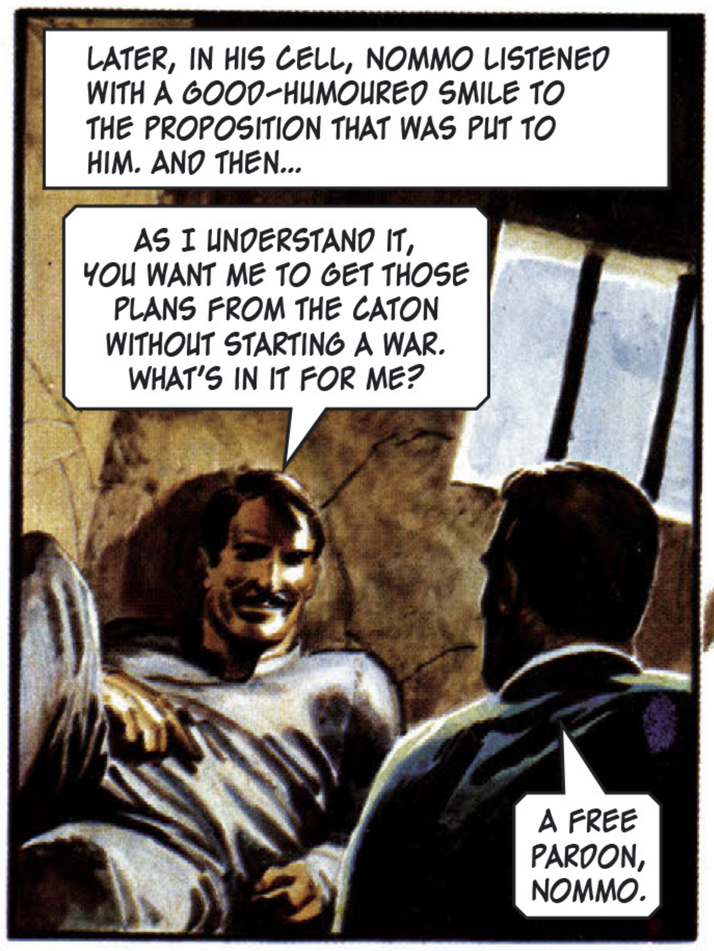
ELEKTON'S TOP SCIENTIST, PERIC...
THE CATONS RELEASED ONE OF THEIR TOP CRIMINALS FROM GAOL TO STEAL THE PLANS...
WHY DO WE NOT RELEASE ONE OF OUR TOP CRIMINALS TO GET THEM BACK?

TOP SECURITY GAOL OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WAS THE PRISON ISLE OF ZANIFF, FROM WHOSE ELECTRONICALLY-SCANNED WALLS AND MONSTER-INFESTED WATERS NONE HAD EVER ESCAPED.

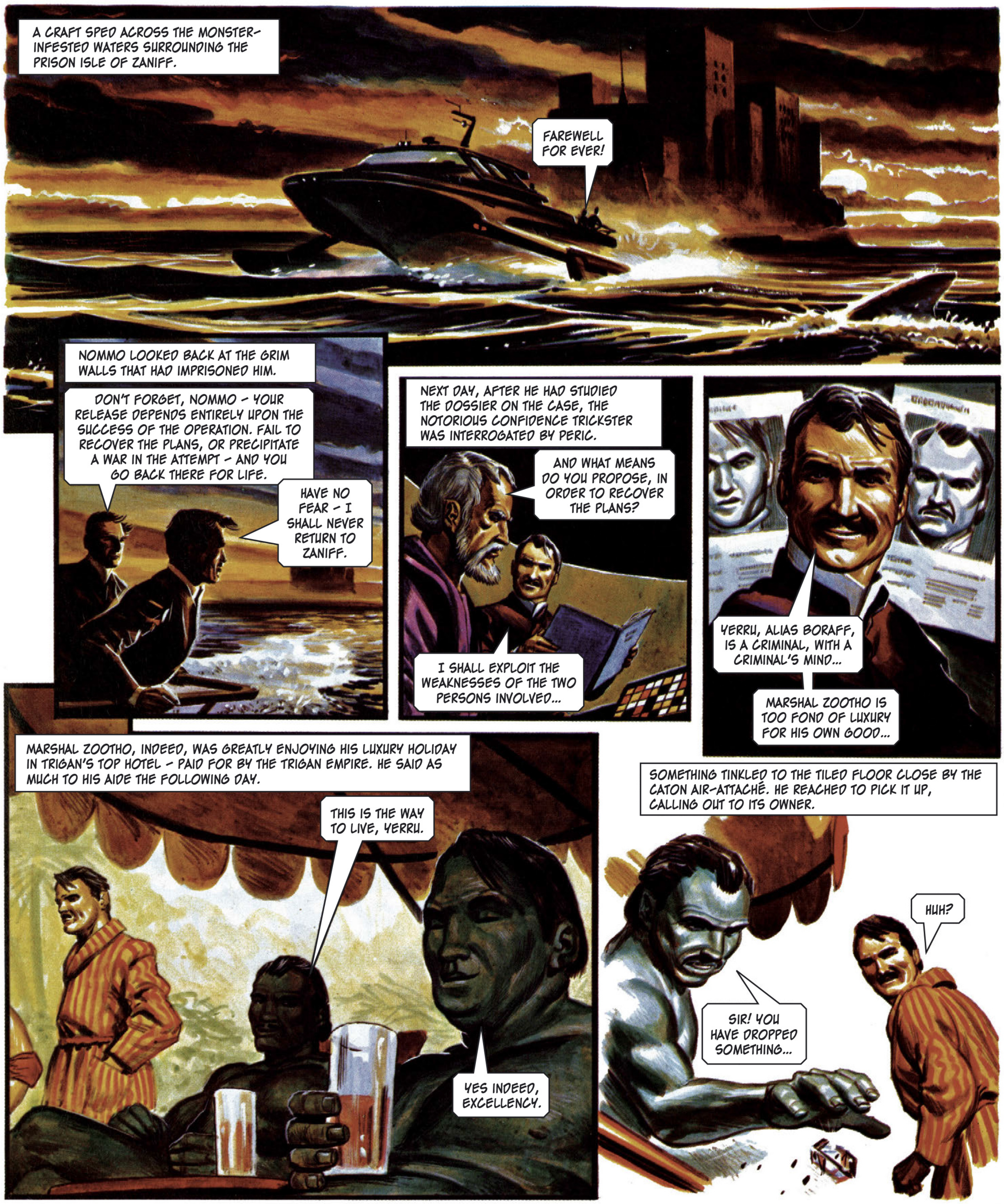

NEXT DAY, THE PRISON GOVERNOR HAD A VISITOR.
RELEASE NOMMO TO YOUR CHARGE? HAS THE SECRET SERVICE TAKEN LEAVE OF ITS SENSES?
NO, GOVERNOR. THE SERVICE IS AS WELL AWARE AS YOU ARE THAT NOMMO IS THE MOST UNSCRUPULOUS CONFIDENCE TRICKSTER OF OUR TIME...


"THE LAST OCCASION HE WAS FREE, HE WENT TO THE DAVELI EMBASSY..."
I AM EMPOWERED BY THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT TO OFFER YOU THE TRIGAN BAY BRIDGE FOR THE SUM OF FIVE MILLION THULLARS.

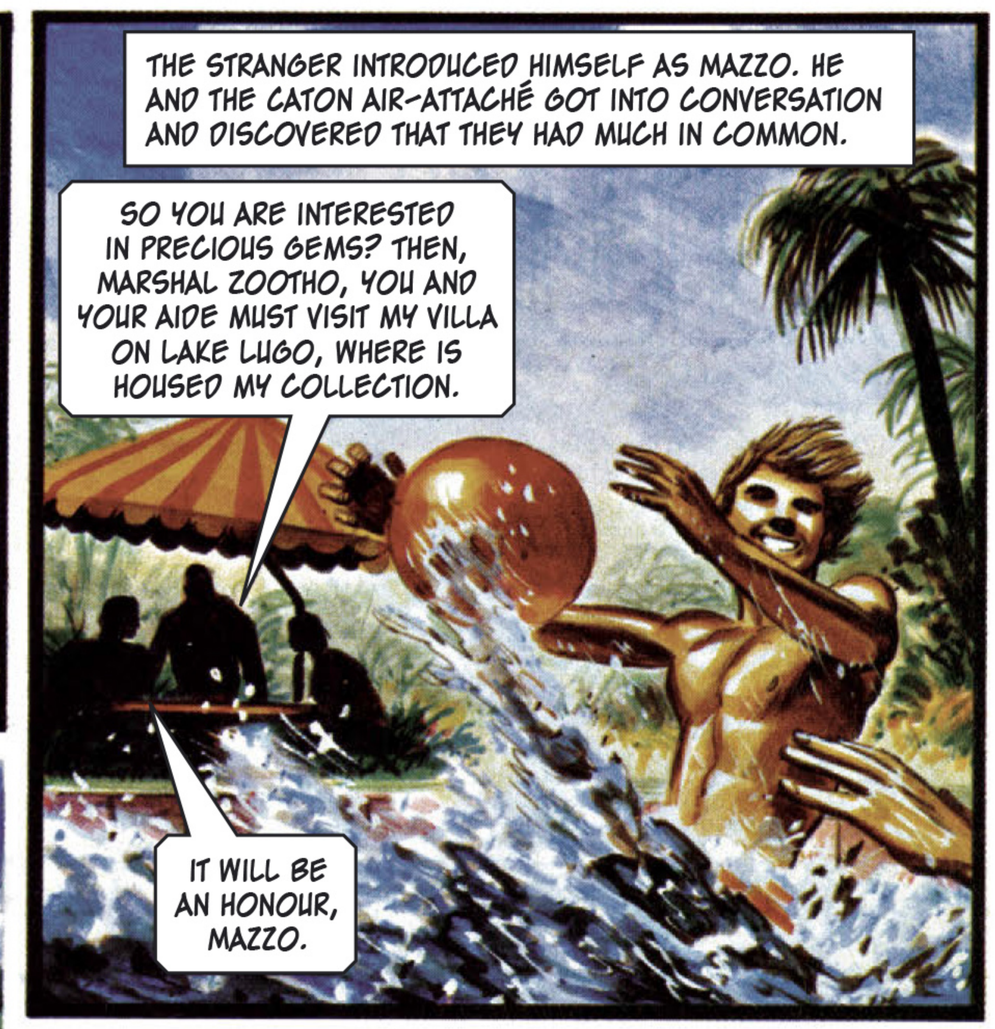

"SO PLAUSIBLE WAS HIS STORY, SO GOOD THE BARGAIN HE OFFERED, THAT THE DAVELIS WERE GLAD TO BUY THE GREAT BRIDGE FOR SCRAP."
FIVE MILLION THULLARS, AND CHEAP AT THE PRICE.
WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN THE VORG VIADUCT AT FOUR MILLION, YOUR EXCELLENCY?

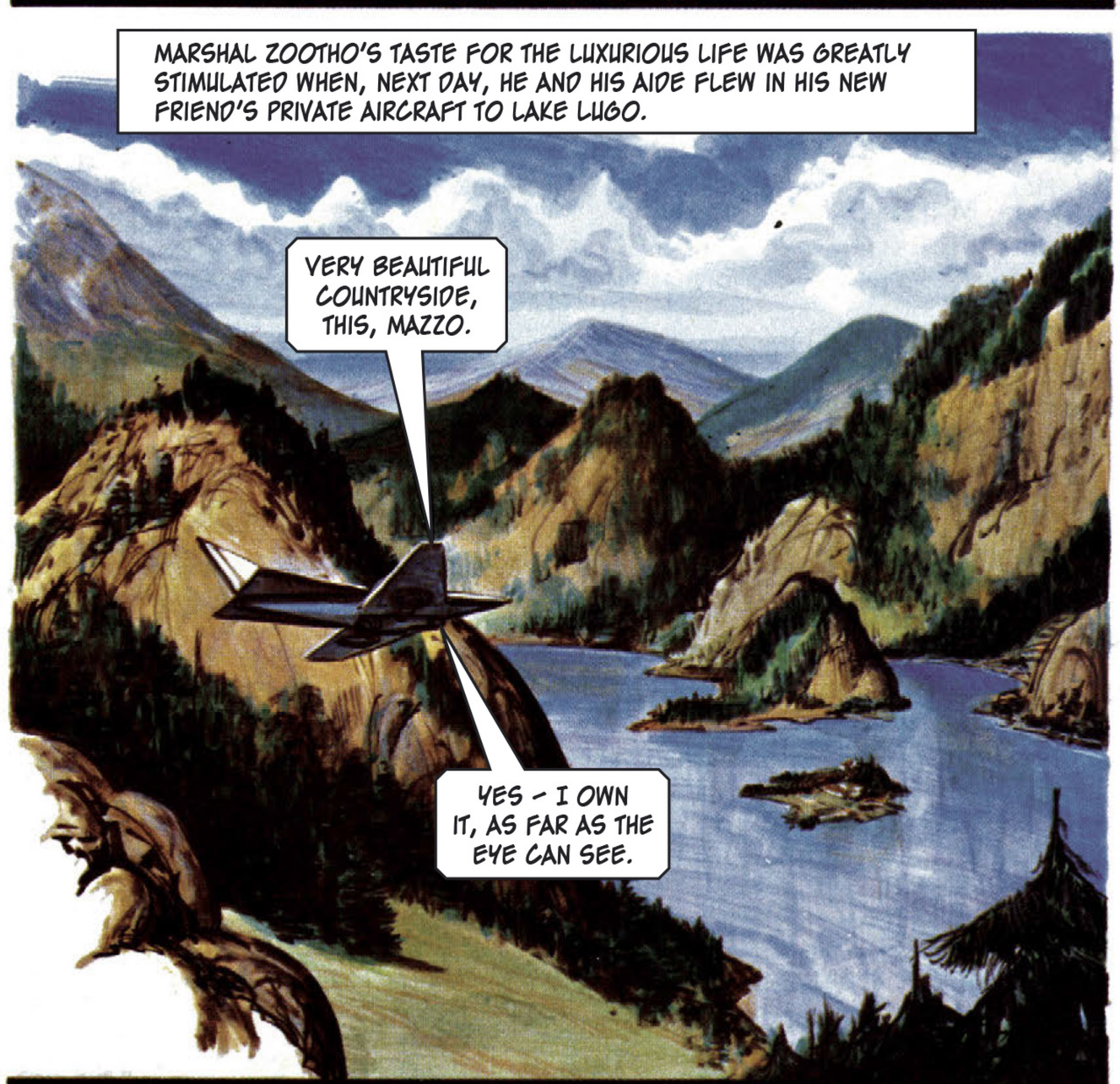

LATER, IN HIS CELL, NOMMO LISTENED WITH A GOOD-HUMOURED SMILE TO THE PROPOSITION THAT WAS PUT TO HIM. AND THEN...
AS I UNDERSTAND IT, YOU WANT ME TO GET THOSE PLANS FROM THE CATON WITHOUT STARTING A WAR. WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?
A FREE PARDON, NOMMO.

THE PLANS ARE AS GOOD AS BACK IN YOUR HANDS, MY FRIEND!


A CRAFT SPED ACROSS THE MONSTER-INFESTED WATERS SURROUNDING THE PRISON ISLE OF ZANIFF.
FAREWELL FOR EVER!
NOMMO LOOKED BACK AT THE GRIM WALLS THAT HAD IMPRISONED HIM.
DON'T FORGET, NOMMO – YOUR RELEASE DEPENDS ENTIRELY UPON THE SUCCESS OF THE OPERATION. FAIL TO RECOVER THE PLANS, OR PRECIPITATE A WAR IN THE ATTEMPT – AND YOU GO BACK THERE FOR LIFE.
HAVE NO FEAR – I SHALL NEVER RETURN TO ZANIFF.
NEXT DAY, AFTER HE HAD STUDIED THE DOSSIER ON THE CASE, THE NOTORIOUS CONFIDENCE TRICKSTER WAS INTERROGATED BY PERIC.
AND WHAT MEANS DO YOU PROPOSE, IN ORDER TO RECOVER THE PLANS?
I SHALL EXPLOIT THE WEAKNESSES OF THE TWO PERSONS INVOLVED...
YERRU, ALIAS BORAFF, IS A CRIMINAL, WITH A CRIMINAL'S MIND...
MARSHAL ZOOTHO IS TOO FOND OF LUXURY FOR HIS OWN GOOD...
MARSHAL ZOOTHO, INDEED, WAS GREATLY ENJOYING HIS LUXURY HOLIDAY IN TRIGAN'S TOP HOTEL – PAID FOR BY THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. HE SAID AS MUCH TO HIS AIDE THE FOLLOWING DAY.
THIS IS THE WAY TO LIVE, YERRU.
YES INDEED, EXCELLENCY.
SOMETHING TINKLED TO THE TILED FLOOR CLOSE BY THE CATON AIR-ATTACHÉ. HE REACHED TO PICK IT UP, CALLING OUT TO ITS OWNER.
HUH?
SIR! YOU HAVE DROPPED SOMETHING...

A SECOND GLANCE TOLD ZOOTHO THAT WHAT HE HELD IN HIS HAND WAS A PRICELESS GEM.
BY ALL THE STARS. THIS STONE MUST BE WORTH A KING'S RANSOM.
MMMM – NICE LITTLE THING ISN'T IT? BUT IT'S FOREVER DROPPING OUT OF ITS SETTING IN MY RING. VERY GRATEFUL TO YOU, SIR.


THE STRANGER INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS MAZZO. HE AND THE CATON AIR-ATTACHÉ GOT INTO CONVERSATION AND DISCOVERED THAT THEY HAD MUCH IN COMMON.
SO YOU ARE INTERESTED IN PRECIOUS GEMS? THEN, MARSHAL ZOOTHO, YOU AND YOUR AIDE MUST VISIT MY VILLA ON LAKE LUGO, WHERE IS HOUSED MY COLLECTION.
IT WILL BE AN HONOUR, MAZZO.


MARSHAL ZOOTHO'S TASTE FOR THE LUXURIOUS LIFE WAS GREATLY STIMULATED WHEN, NEXT DAY, HE AND HIS AIDE FLEW IN HIS NEW FRIEND'S PRIVATE AIRCRAFT TO LAKE LUGO.
VERY BEAUTIFUL COUNTRYSIDE, THIS, MAZZO.
YES – I OWN IT, AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE.

THEY ALIGHTED ON THE BREATHTAKING ISLAND UPON WHICH STOOD A SUMPTUOUS VILLA.

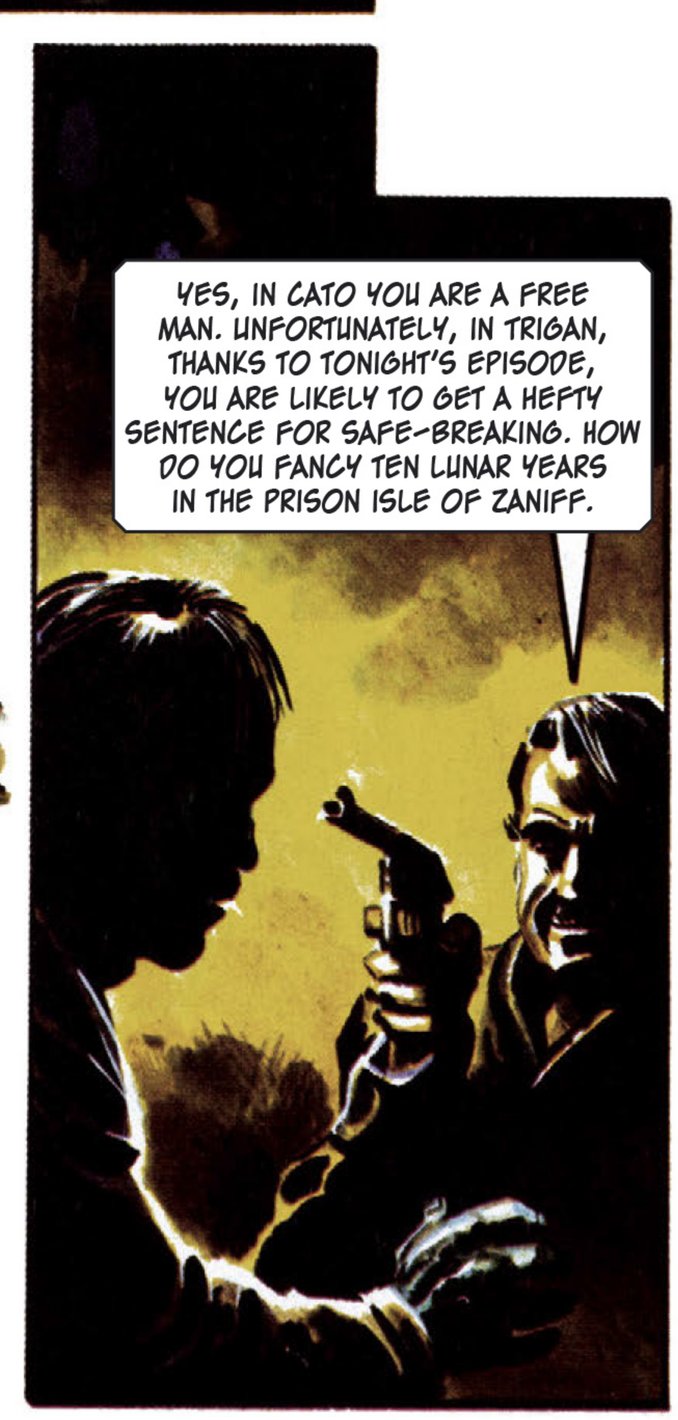
THAT EVENING, AFTER SUPPER, HE WHO CALLED HIMSELF MAZZO DISPLAYED A FABULOUS COLLECTION OF PRICELESS GEMS TO THE TWO CATONS.
YES – QUITE NICE, AREN'T THEY?
FANTASTIC! UNBELIEVABLE!

MAZZO REPLACED HIS COLLECTION IN THE WALL SAFE...
I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE SAFE-BREAKER WHO COULD FIND HIS WAY INTO HERE!
THAT NIGHT, WHEN ALL SHOULD HAVE BEEN ASLEEP IN THE VILLA, A DARK FORM STOLE TOWARDS THE SAFE.

ALL THE LIGHTS OF THE ROOM WENT ON REVEALING MARSHAL ZOOTHO'S AIDE STANDING BY THE OPEN SAFE FULL OF PRECIOUS GEMS.
AAAAAAAH!
OLIVER FREY

THE PERSON KNOWN TO HIM AS MAZZO ADDRESSED HIM CALMLY.
NICE AND QUIETLY, YERRU – OR SHALL I CALL YOU BY YOUR REAL NAME OF BORAFF? SIT DOWN, MY FRIEND. YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE A LITTLE CHAT.

THE SAFEBREAKER STARED IN ALARM AT HIS CAPTOR.
YOU – YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
YES, YOU ARE BORAFF, RELEASED FROM GAOL IN CATO FOR THE EXPRESS PURPOSE OF ACCOMPANYING MARSHAL ZOOTHO TO TRIGAN IN ORDER TO STEAL THE PLANS FROM THE SAFE AT THE AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS. YES, WE KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU.

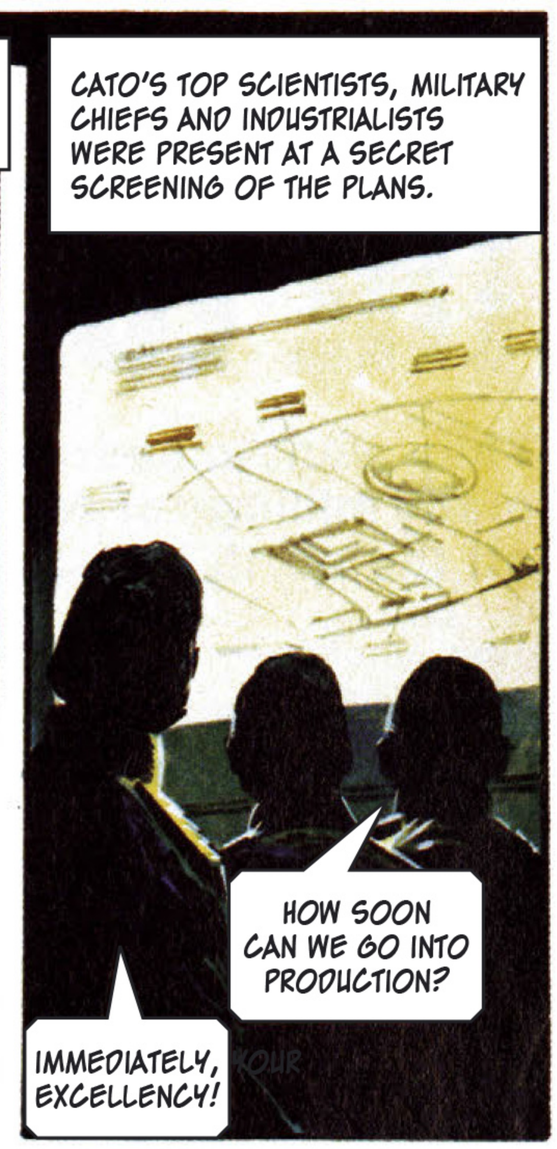

YES, IN CATO YOU ARE A FREE MAN. UNFORTUNATELY, IN TRIGAN, THANKS TO TONIGHT'S EPISODE, YOU ARE LIKELY TO GET A HEFTY SENTENCE FOR SAFE-BREAKING. HOW DO YOU FANCY TEN LUNAR YEARS IN THE PRISON ISLE OF ZANIFF.

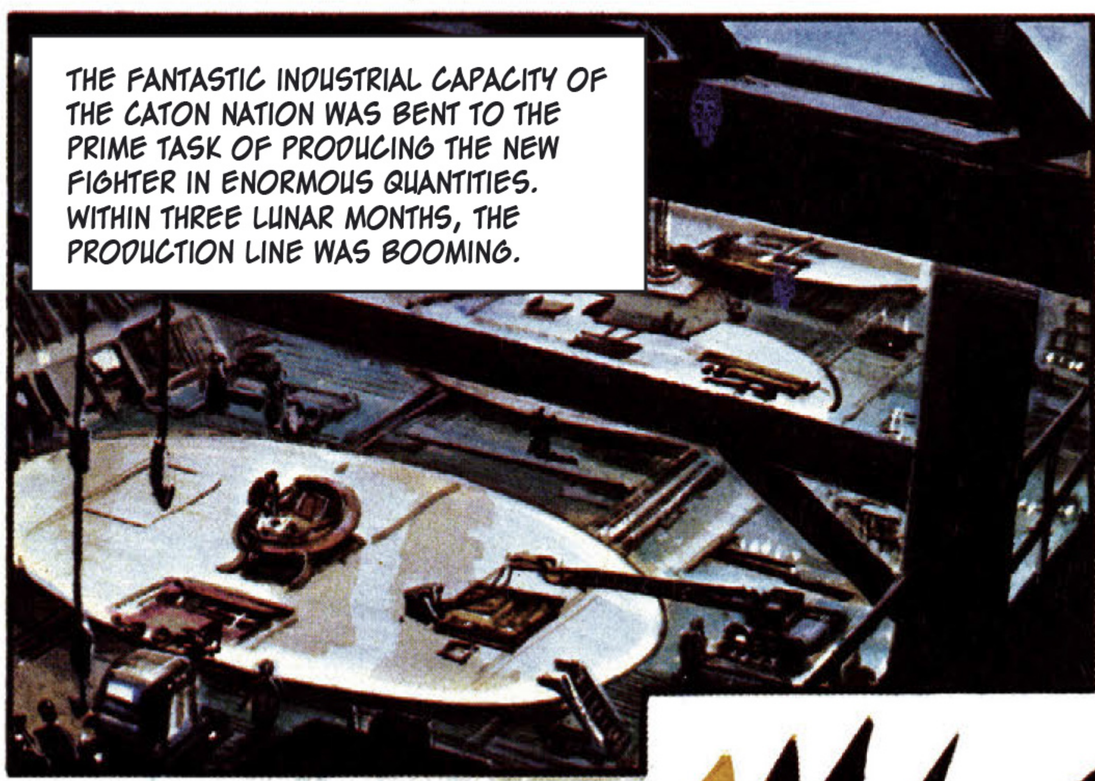
THE ANSWER CAME QUICKLY – DESPERATELY...
WHAT – WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?
THAT'S THE SORT OF TALK I LIKE TO HEAR!
WE CAN DO BUSINESS, MY FRIEND.
FIRST – NOT A WORD OF TONIGHT'S DOINGS TO ANYONE..!

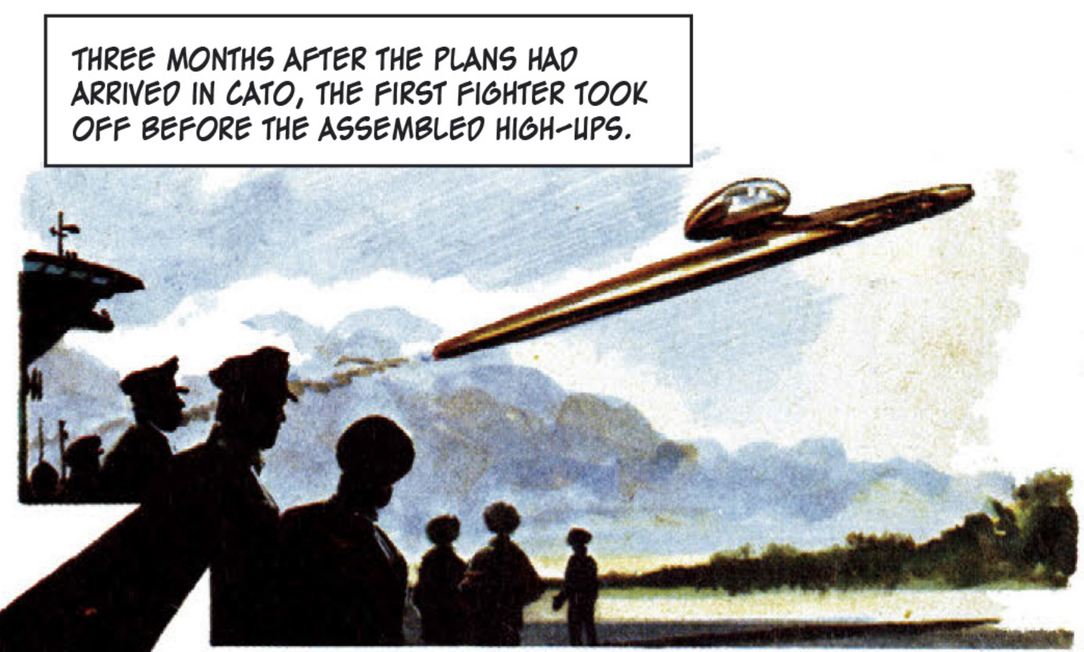
THE FOLLOWING MORNING, MARSHAL ZOOTHO AND HIS 'AIDE' TOOK THEIR LEAVE OF THEIR HOST.
FAREWELL, MARSHAL AND A GOOD JOURNEY.
FAREWELL, NOMMO, AND MANY THANKS FOR YOUR MOST GENEROUS HOSPITALITY.

LATER THAT DAY, THEY ARRIVED BACK IN CATO AND WERE GREETED BY THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF.
YOU HAVE IT?
I HAVE IT!

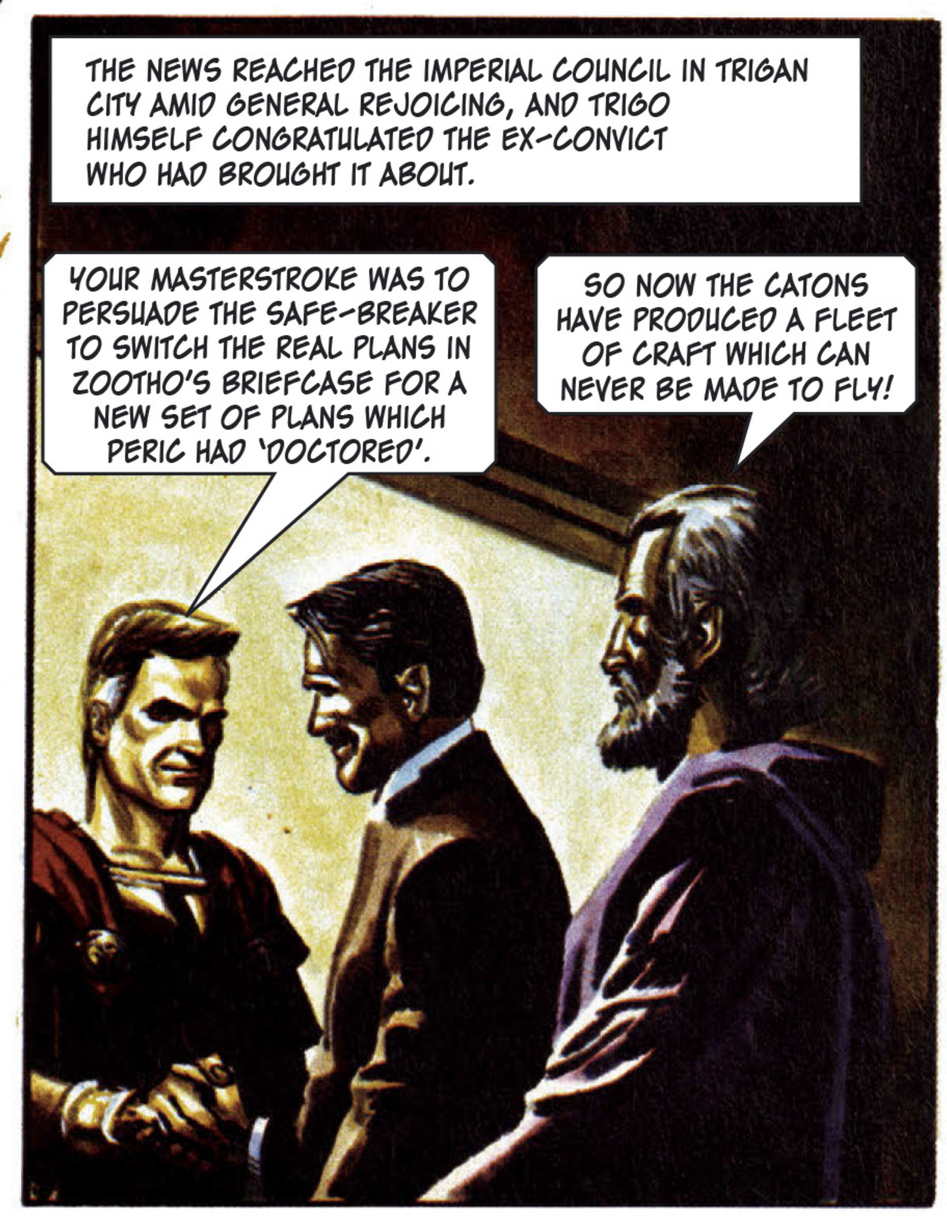
FROM THE LOCKED BRIEFCASE MARSHAL ZOOTHO PRODUCED A TINY SPOOL OF MICROFILM.
BEHOLD – THE PLANS OF THE TRIGANS' REVOLUTIONARY NEW FIGHTER CRAFT!
YOU HAVE DONE EXCELLENTLY, ZOOTHO!

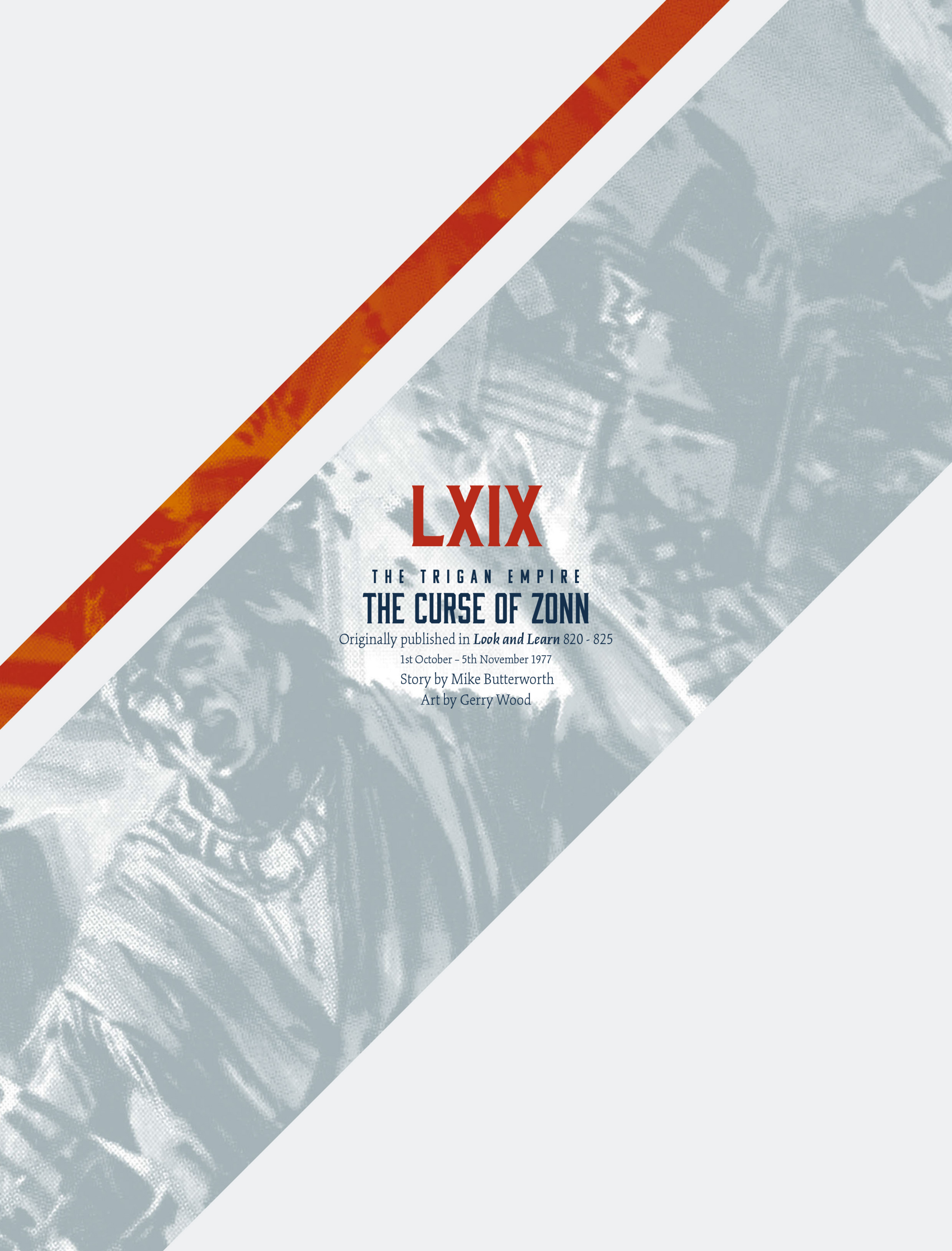

CATO'S TOP SCIENTISTS, MILITARY CHIEFS AND INDUSTRIALISTS WERE PRESENT AT A SECRET SCREENING OF THE PLANS.
HOW SOON CAN WE GO INTO PRODUCTION?
IMMEDIATELY, EXCELLENCY!


THE FANTASTIC INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY OF THE CATON NATION WAS BENT TO THE PRIME TASK OF PRODUCING THE NEW FIGHTER IN ENORMOUS QUANTITIES. WITHIN THREE LUNAR MONTHS, THE PRODUCTION LINE WAS BOOMING.


THREE MONTHS AFTER THE PLANS HAD ARRIVED IN CATO, THE FIRST FIGHTER TOOK OFF BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED HIGH-UPS.

...AND IMMEDIATELY CRASHED!


THE NEWS REACHED THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL IN TRIGAN CITY AMID GENERAL REJOICING, AND TRIGO HIMSELF CONGRATULATED THE EX-CONVICT WHO HAD BROUGHT IT ABOUT.
YOUR MASTERSTROKE WAS TO PERSUADE THE SAFE-BREAKER TO SWITCH THE REAL PLANS IN ZOOTHO'S BRIEFCASE FOR A NEW SET OF PLANS WHICH PERIC HAD 'DOCTORED'.
SO NOW THE CATONS HAVE PRODUCED A FLEET OF CRAFT WHICH CAN NEVER BE MADE TO FLY!



LXIX

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE CURSE OF ZONN

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 820 - 825

1st October – 5th November 1977

Story by Mike Butterworth

Art by Gerry Wood

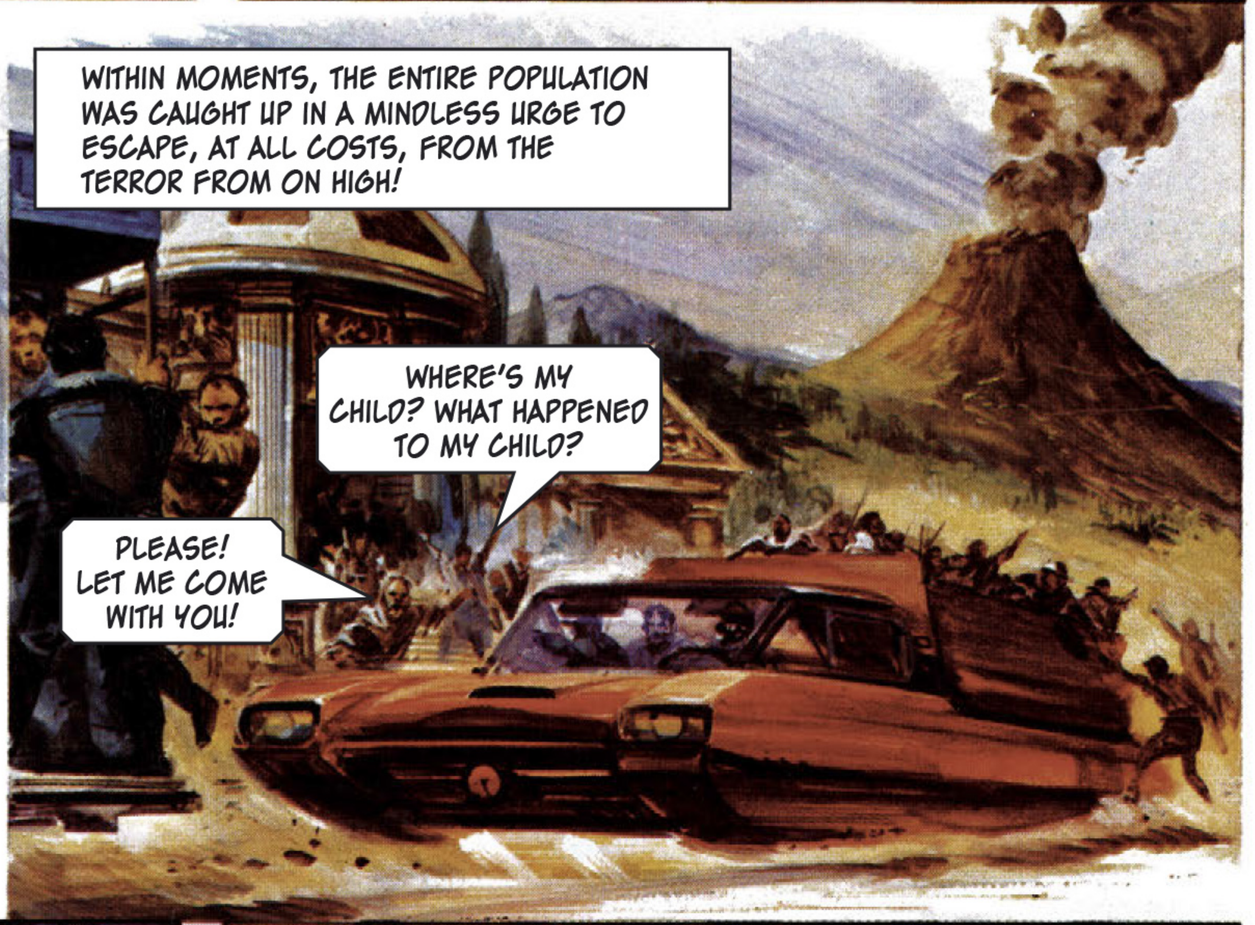
THE SEACOAST TOWN OF ZOOTHA HAD BECOME, IN RECENT YEARS, THE HOLIDAY PLAYGROUND OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE: A TEEMING RESORT OF THE MOST EXTREME LUXURY.
THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW WAS THERE WITH HIS FRIEND PERIC, THE TOP SCIENTIST OF ELEKTON.
TELL ME OF THE LEGEND OF ZONN, PERIC.
IT DATES BACK TO PRE-HISTORY. PERSONALLY, I HAVE GRAVE DOUBTS AS TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE LEGEND – BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT AS TO THE OUTCOME.
"IN THOSE FAR-OFF DAYS, ZOOTHA ENJOYED MUCH THE SAME POSITION AS IT DOES NOW – A RESORT FOR THE PROSPEROUS RACE OF PEOPLE WHO INHABITED THIS PART OF THE CONTINENT."
"IT WAS ALSO THE CENTRE FOR A FORBIDDEN SECT WHO WORSHIPPED AN IDOL NAMED ZONN."
ALL HAIL, ZONN! MASTER OF DARKNESS!
STRIKE DOWN THAT IDOL!
ALL WHO TOUCH ZONN WILL IMMEDIATELY PERISH – AND SO WILL THE CITY AND ALL IN IT!
"THE AUTHORITIES, IT IS SAID, DISCOVERED THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE SECRET TEMPLE. IT WAS RAIDED BY CITY GUARDS..."
AAAAAAAAGHH!
"ACCOMPANIED BY A FLASH OF LIGHTNING WHICH INVARIABLY PLAYS A PART IN SUCH LEGENDS, THE SOLDIER WHO STRUCK AT THE IDOL FELL AN INSTANT VICTIM TO THE PRIEST'S CURSE."

AND THE REST OF THE LEGEND...?
THE REST OF THE LEGEND, AS WE KNOW, IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN REAL-LIFE DISASTER.
MOUNT RATHOS HAS BEEN AN EXTINCT VOLCANO SINCE BEFORE THE DAWN OF HISTORY. BUT IT ONCE CAME ALIVE...IN THOSE FAR-OFF DAYS.
AS HIS FRIEND CONTINUED, JANNO SAW THE SCENE IN HIS MIND'S EYE... "ON ONE NIGHT OF FLAME AND DESTRUCTION, RATHOS ERUPTED AND WIPED OUT THE CITY AND EVERY LIVING THING IN IT - JUST AS THE PRIEST OF ZONN HAD PREDICTED!"
LATER THAT DAY...
RECENT EXCAVATIONS HAVING REVEALED WHAT IS PRESUMED TO BE THE ORIGINAL SITE OF THE TEMPLE OF ZONN, THE TOURIST BOARD HAVE DECIDED TO PUT ON A SHOW - A RE-ENACTMENT OF THE LEGEND. I PERSONALLY DISAPPROVE OF SUCH GOINGS-ON.
IT SOUNDS HARMLESS ENOUGH, PERIC.
THEY WATCHED THE PAGEANT AMONG THE TEMPLE RUINS.
AAAAAAAAH!
AND THEN...
SOMEONE FETCH A DOCTOR! QUICKLY!
I THINK HE'S... HE'S...
...IT HAPPENED!
LOOK AT THE MOUNTAIN!
LOOK AT IT!

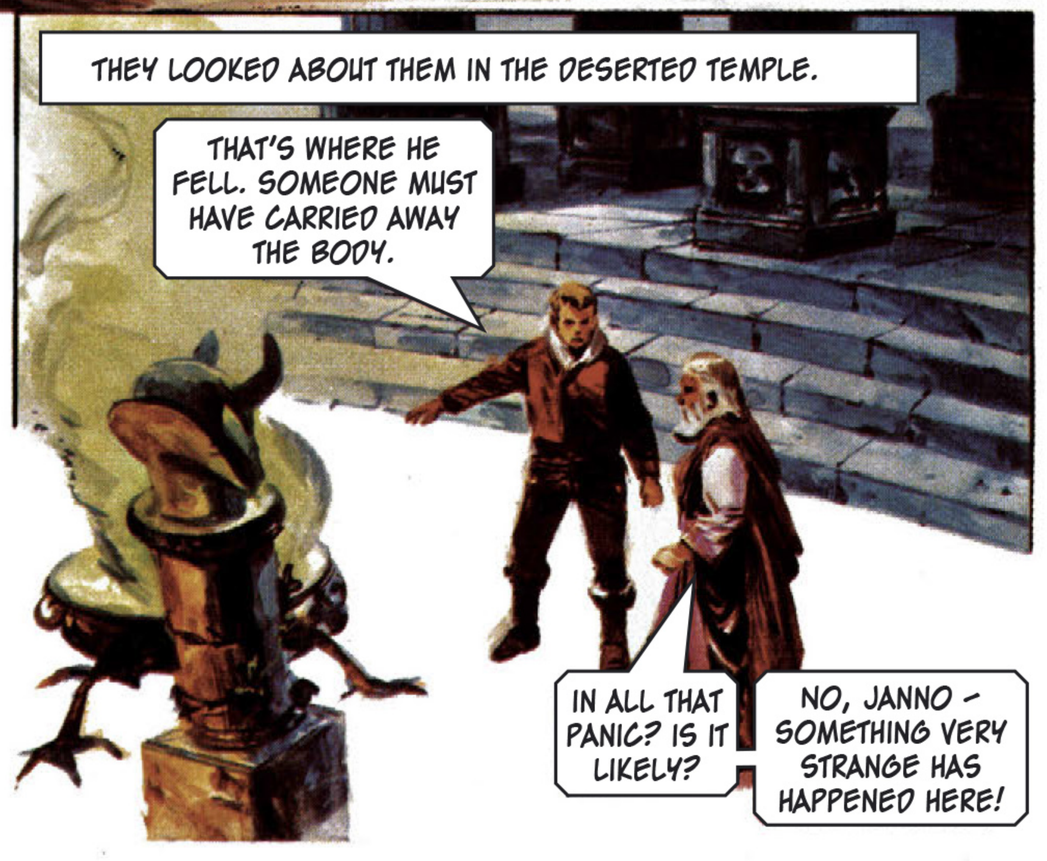
HIGH ABOVE THE TOWN, A TALL COLUMN OF DENSE SMOKE AROSE FROM THE SUPPOSEDLY EXTINCT VOLCANO OF MOUNT RATHOS!

A TERROR-STRICKEN CRY RANG OUT IN THE ANCIENT TEMPLE RUINS.
IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN JUST AS IT DID IN THE OLD DAYS. THAT DEMON IS BRINGING RUIN AND DESTRUCTION UPON THE TOWN AND ALL IN IT!

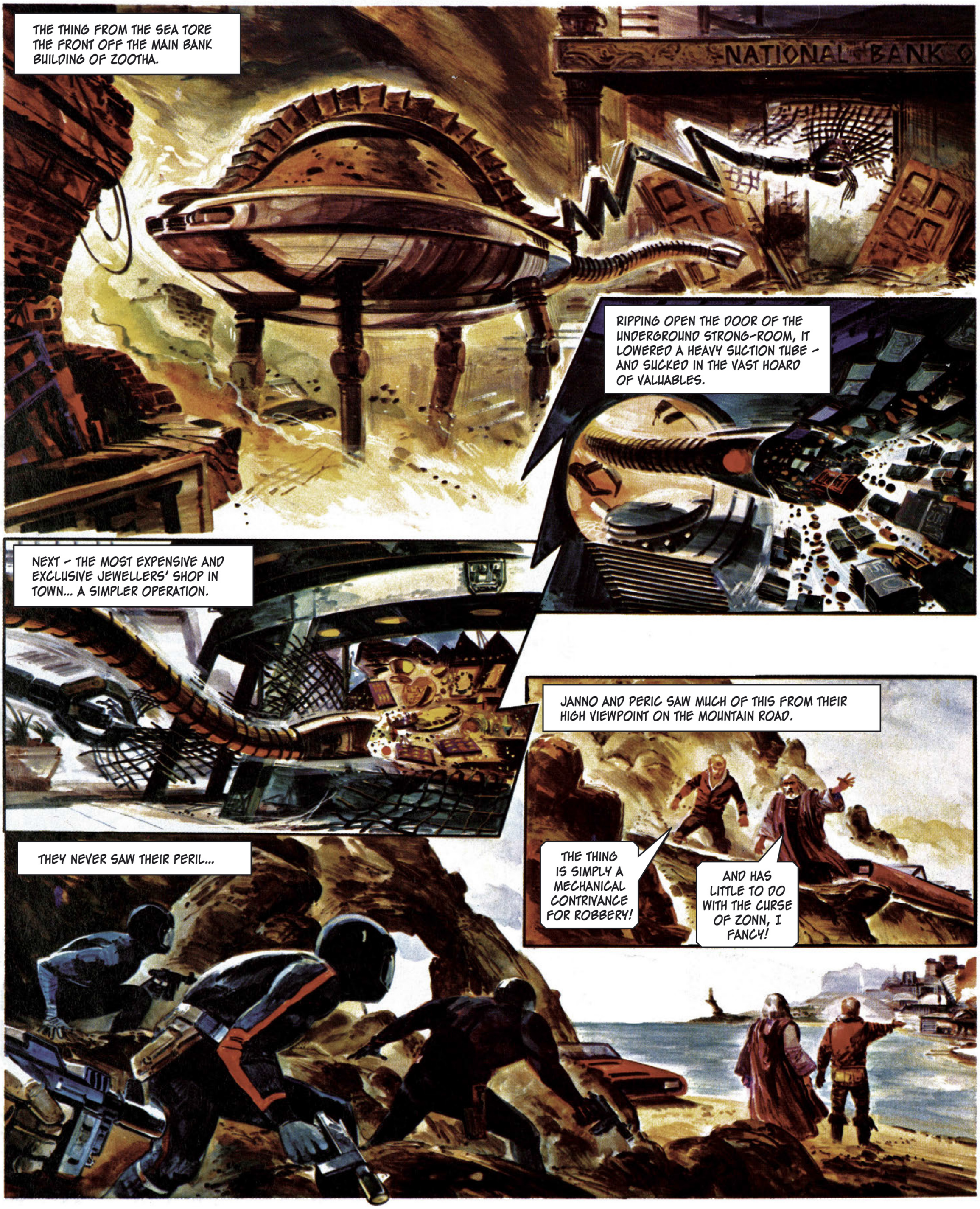
PANIC!
THE MOUNTAIN WILL EXPLODE!
WE SHALL BE ENGULFED IN THE LAVA.
GET ME OUT OF HERE.
SAVE ME!


WITHIN MOMENTS, THE ENTIRE POPULATION WAS CAUGHT UP IN A MINDLESS URGE TO ESCAPE, AT ALL COSTS, FROM THE TERROR FROM ON HIGH!
WHERE'S MY CHILD? WHAT HAPPENED TO MY CHILD?
PLEASE! LET ME COME WITH YOU!

ALONE OF ALL THE PEOPLE IN ZOOTHA, JANNO AND PERIC KEPT THEIR HEADS.
WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK, PERIC?
I THINK I SHOULD LIKE TO EXAMINE THE ACTOR WHO WAS SO DRAMATICALLY STRUCK DEAD BY THE IDOL ZONN!

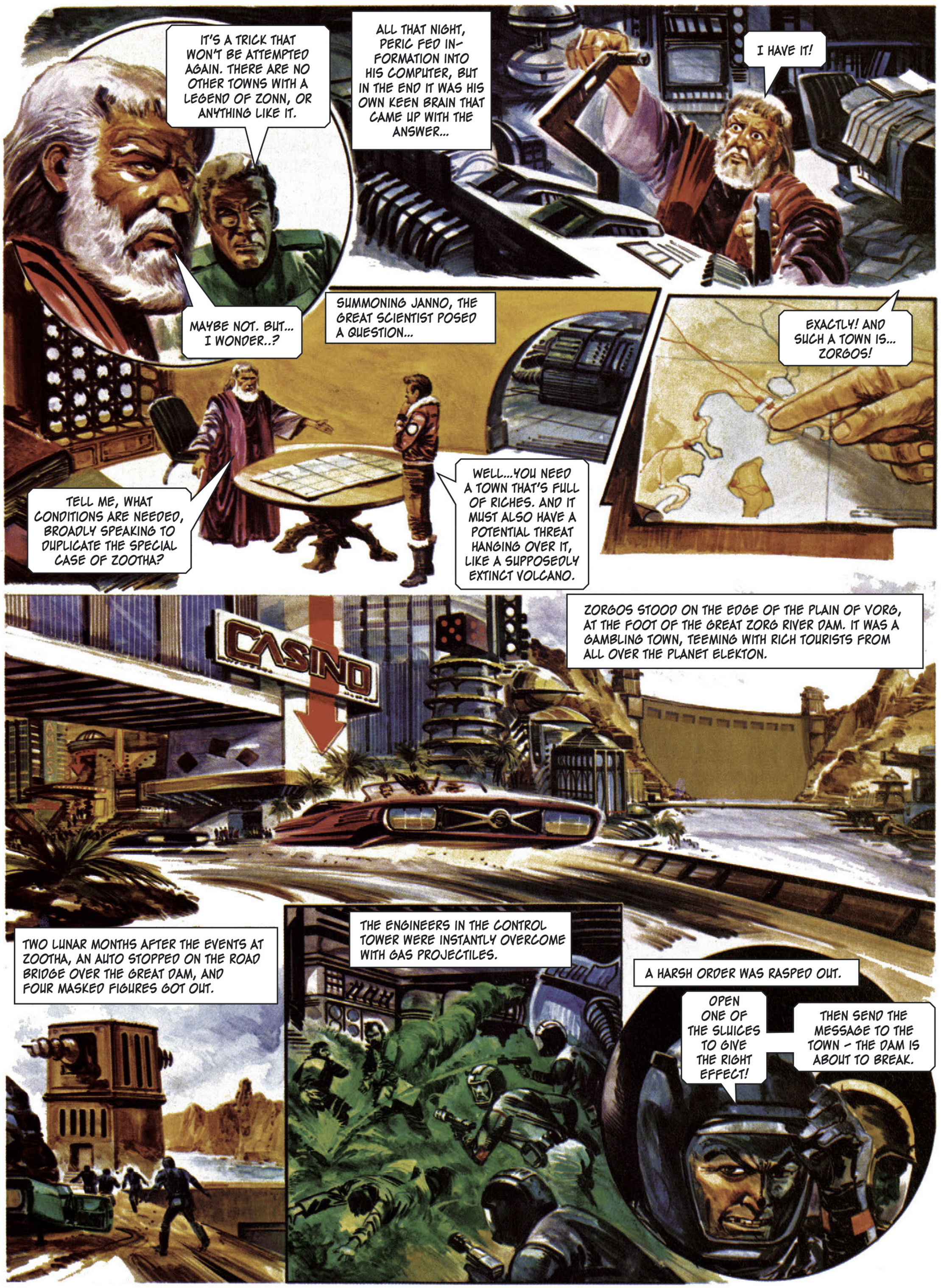

THEY LOOKED ABOUT THEM IN THE DESERTED TEMPLE.
THAT'S WHERE HE FELL. SOMEONE MUST HAVE CARRIED AWAY THE BODY.
IN ALL THAT PANIC? IS IT LIKELY?
NO, JANNO – SOMETHING VERY STRANGE HAS HAPPENED HERE!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
JANNO, THERE IS A ROAD LEADING UP TO THE CRATER OF MOUNT RATHOS. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO DRIVE ME UP THERE?
JANNO'S AUTO WAS SAFELY PARKED AT THEIR HOTEL. PRESENTLY, THE TWO FRIENDS WERE DRIVING THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE NOW DESERTED TOWN. CLIMBING UPWARDS.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND UP THERE?
WHAT WOULD ONE EXPECT TO FIND IN A CRATER THAT HAS BEEN EXTINCT FOR OVER A MILLENNIUM?
NEARING THE SUMMIT, JANNO CHANCED TO GLANCE SEAWARDS. WHAT HE SAW THERE MADE HIM BRING THE AUTO TO A SLITHERING HALT, AND POINT...
BY ALL THE STARS, PERIC! LOOK OUT THERE!
AAAAAAH!
FROM OUT OF THE DEEP, A STRANGE SHAPE!
REACHING THE SHORE, IT ROSE ON FOUR LEGS AND ENTERED THE TOWN.
THEN BEGAN AN ORGY OF DESTRUCTION!
UP ON HIGH, THE TWO COMRADES WATCHED AND WONDERED.
WHAT – WHAT IS IT, PERIC?
THE LATEST MANIFESTATION OF THE CURSE OF ZONN!


THE THING FROM THE SEA TORE THE FRONT OFF THE MAIN BANK BUILDING OF ZOOTHA.
NATIONAL BANK
RIPPING OPEN THE DOOR OF THE UNDERGROUND STRONG-ROOM, IT LOWERED A HEAVY SUCTION TUBE - AND SUCKED IN THE VAST HOARD OF VALUABLES.
NEXT - THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE JEWELLERS' SHOP IN TOWN... A SIMPLER OPERATION.
JANNO AND PERIC SAW MUCH OF THIS FROM THEIR HIGH VIEWPOINT ON THE MOUNTAIN ROAD.
THE THING IS SIMPLY A MECHANICAL CONTRIVANCE FOR ROBBERY!
AND HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH THE CURSE OF ZONN, I FANCY!
THEY NEVER SAW THEIR PERIL...

...TILL IT WAS TOO LATE!
PERIC! LOOK OUT!
STRIKE THEM DOWN!
OVER WITH THEM!
THE TWO TRIGANS WERE CLUBBED TO UNCONSCIOUSNESS – AND THEN LIFTED INTO THE AUTO.
WE WANT THIS TO LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT.
WELL DONE. AND NOW – TO CLOSE DOWN THE OPERATION.
AND THE THING FROM THE SEA, ITS TASK FINISHED, RETURNED FROM WHENCE IT CAME.
SOON AFTER, THE COLUMN OF SMOKE CEASED TO POUR FROM THE CRATER OF MOUNT RATHOS.
MEANWHILE, ON A LEDGE BELOW THE MOUNTAIN ROAD, WHERE THE AUTO HAD LANDED, JANNO RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS AND LOOKED ABOUT HIM.
WHERE... AND HOW..!
MOMENTS LATER, JANNO SIZED UP THE SITUATION...
THIS AUTO IS BALANCED AS IF ON A KNIFE-EDGE. ONE UNGUARDED MOVE, AND WE'RE GOING TO FALL TO DESTRUCTION.

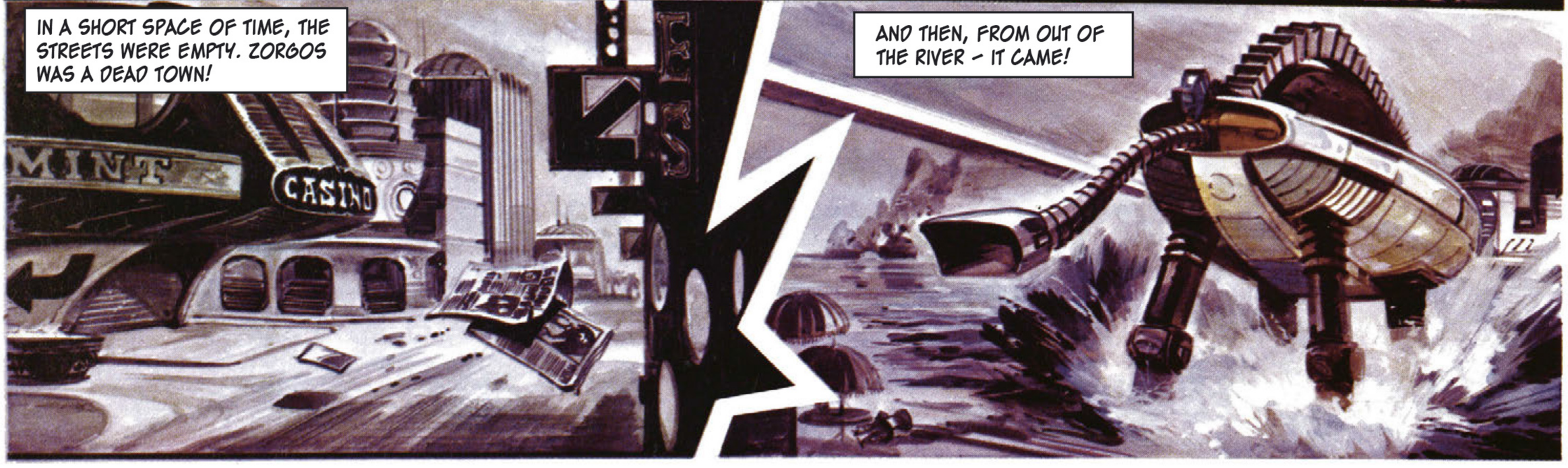
WHEN PERIC RECOVERED CONSCIOUSNESS, JANNO TOLD HIM WHAT THEY MUST DO...
WE CAN'T RISK STAYING HERE, SO WE'RE CLIMBING BACK UP!
JANNO! I'M AN OLD MAN! I COULD NEVER...
THE YOUNG AIR FLEET PILOT CARRIED HIS OLD FRIEND ON HIS BACK AS HE CLAWED HIS WAY TO SAFETY.
THEY REACHED THE TOP, IN TIME TO SEE PEOPLE FLOCKING BACK INTO THE TOWN BELOW.
LOOK! THEY'VE SEEN THAT THE VOLCANO HAS STOPPED SMOKING. THEY'VE RETURNED – TO A RANSACKED TOWN!
AND WHAT WILL BE THEIR REACTIONS, I WONDER?
STUNNED AND HORRIFIED, THE PEOPLE GAZED ABOUT THEM AT THE DESTRUCTION WHICH THE THING FROM THE SEA HAD WROUGHT.
IT IS THE CURSE OF ZONN!
ZONN HAS HAD HIS REVENGE UPON US!
BUT NO SUCH SUPERSTITIOUS TALK WAS TO BE HEARD THE FOLLOWING DAY, WHEN PERIC AND JANNO CONFERRED WITH TRIGAN'S TOP POLICE CHIEFS.
THE WHOLE THING WAS FAKED, INCLUDING THE SMOKE FROM THE VOLCANO. AS SOON AS THE TOWN WAS CLEARED, THIS THING RIPPED OUT EVERYTHING OF GREAT VALUE. IF JANNO AND I HAD NOT WITNESSED IT, NO ONE WOULD HAVE KNOWN.


IT'S A TRICK THAT WON'T BE ATTEMPTED AGAIN. THERE ARE NO OTHER TOWNS WITH A LEGEND OF ZONN, OR ANYTHING LIKE IT.
MAYBE NOT. BUT... I WONDER..?
ALL THAT NIGHT, PERIC FED IN-FORMATION INTO HIS COMPUTER, BUT IN THE END IT WAS HIS OWN KEEN BRAIN THAT CAME UP WITH THE ANSWER...
I HAVE IT!
SUMMONING JANNO, THE GREAT SCIENTIST POSED A QUESTION...
TELL ME, WHAT CONDITIONS ARE NEEDED, BROADLY SPEAKING TO DUPLICATE THE SPECIAL CASE OF ZOOTHA?
WELL...YOU NEED A TOWN THAT'S FULL OF RICHES. AND IT MUST ALSO HAVE A POTENTIAL THREAT HANGING OVER IT, LIKE A SUPPOSEDLY EXTINCT VOLCANO.
EXACTLY! AND SUCH A TOWN IS... ZORGOS!
CASINO
ZORGOS STOOD ON THE EDGE OF THE PLAIN OF VORG, AT THE FOOT OF THE GREAT ZORG RIVER DAM. IT WAS A GAMBLING TOWN, TEEMING WITH RICH TOURISTS FROM ALL OVER THE PLANET ELEKTON.
TWO LUNAR MONTHS AFTER THE EVENTS AT ZOOTHA, AN AUTO STOPPED ON THE ROAD BRIDGE OVER THE GREAT DAM, AND FOUR MASKED FIGURES GOT OUT.
THE ENGINEERS IN THE CONTROL TOWER WERE INSTANTLY OVERCOME WITH GAS PROJECTILES.
A HARSH ORDER WAS RASPED OUT.
OPEN ONE OF THE SLUICES TO GIVE THE RIGHT EFFECT!
THEN SEND THE MESSAGE TO THE TOWN – THE DAM IS ABOUT TO BREAK.

A SINGLE, HARMLESS JET OF WATER FROM A SLUICE DREW ALL EYES TO THE MIGHTY DAM.

PEOPLE WATCHED, AND WONDERED...
MAKES YOU THINK, DOESN'T IT? THE TREMENDOUS PRESSURE OF WATER BEHIND THAT WALL!
I DON'T LIKE TO THINK OF IT!

AND THEN, WHEN EVERYONE'S ATTENTION WAS DRAWN...
ALARM! ALARM! ALARM! THE DAM IS ABOUT TO BREAK!
FLEE FOR YOUR LIVES!
PANIC SWEPT THROUGH ZORGOS LIKE A FOREST FIRE. FROM OUT OF THE LUXURY HOTELS, FROM OUT OF THE GAMBLING CASINOS, THE SPLENDID RESTAURANTS AND SHOPS, POURED FEAR-CRAZED MOBS!
AAAAAAH! I DON'T WANT TO DROWN!
CASIN


IN A SHORT SPACE OF TIME, THE STREETS WERE EMPTY. ZORGOS WAS A DEAD TOWN!
MINT
CASINO
AND THEN, FROM OUT OF THE RIVER - IT CAME!

IT STALKED THE MAIN STREET, AS IF UNDECIDED WHERE TO BEGIN ITS TASK.
IT WAS WATCHED – BY JANNO, WITH A TWO-WAY PORTABLE RADIO!
LISTEN – IT'S COMING CLOSE PAST ME AND HEADING FOR THE BANK BUILDING. I'LL CEASE TRANSMITTING NOW, IN CASE IT MIGHT HEAR...
AND THEN – HE WAS SPOTTED!
BY ALL THE STARS!
THE THING WAS QUICK – QUICKER THAN JANNO, WHO FELT HIMSELF BEING SUCKED UP BY A MIGHTY FORCE.
AAAAAAGH!
AND HE LANDED IN A BARE, WINDOWLESS COMPARTMENT.
UUUUGH!
THE COMPARTMENT DOOR OPENED. A MERCILESS VOICE DINNED IN HIS EARS.
FOOL! YOU SHOULD HAVE FLED WITH THE REST.
NOW YOU WILL DIE!

LYING DAZED AND HELPLESS ON THE FLOOR, JANNO'S FATE SEEMED SEALED, BUT AN INSTANT BEFORE THE WEAPON COULD HAVE FIRED AT THE ACE AIR-PILOT, IT WAS KNOCKED FROM THE MASKED KILLER'S HAND BY ONE OF HIS THUG COMRADES.

FOOL! DO YOU NOT HAVE YES IN YOUR HEAD?

HUH? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THE NEWCOMER POINTED TO THE TELL-TALE TWO-WAY RADIO ON JANNO'S BACK.

SEE THAT? WHAT INNOCENT BYSTANDER CARRIES A PIECE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT?

A SPY! WE'LL TAKE HIM TO THE CHIEF!

THE YOUNG TRIGAN WAS DRAGGED INTO A LARGER COMPARTMENT, AND BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH HIM THEY CALLED THE CHIEF.

CHIEF, WE'VE JUST PICKED UP THIS STRANGER...

STRANGER? HE'S NO STRANGER, YOU FOOL! DON'T YOU KNOW WHO HE IS? THAT'S JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW!

WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH HE KNOWS - AND QUICKLY!

CONTINUE WITH THE RAID ON THE TOWN BANK. I AM GOING TO INTERROGATE THE PRISONER - BY FORCE!

A TOUCH OF THE CONTROLS AND THE THING FROM THE SEA RIPPED OUT THE DOOR OF THE BANK!

AND THEN - FROM OUT OF THE SHATTERED WALL CAME A COMPANY OF TRIGAN GUARDS!

OPEN FIRE!

FROM THE REAR CAME FIGHTING MACHINES!
OPEN FIRE ON THE THING!
THE THING FROM THE SEA FOUGHT BACK – DEVASTATINGLY!
EEEEEEEEGH!
AAAAAAGH!
THEN – WHEN HIS INTERROGATOR'S ATTENTION WAS DIVERTED BY THE FURIOUS ACTION OUTSIDE, JANNO SAW HIS CHANCE...
DESTROY EVERY-THING IN SIGHT. AND DON'T GET CAUGHT OFF-BALANCE.
IF I CAN MAKE THOSE CONTROLS...
THEY GRABBED AT HIM AS HE THREW HIMSELF AT THE NEAREST LEVER – BUT THEY WERE TOO LATE!
STOP HIM!
TOO LATE! AAAAAA! WE'RE GOING OVER!
ONE LEG OUT OF CONTROL, THE THING FROM THE SEA TOPPLED TO THE GROUND AMONG ITS OPPONENTS.
ALL ROUND IT! CUT YOUR WAY INTO THE CONTROL COMPARTMENT BEFORE IT CAN GET UP!
LATER, BACK IN THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL CHAMBER AT TRIGAN CITY, THE GREAT SCIENTIST PERIC SUMMED UP THE WHOLE, STRANGE AFFAIR OF THE THING FROM THE SEA.
THE ENTRY WAS SPEEDILY AND VIOLENTLY EFFECTED. JANNO LED THE WAY OUT OF THE MACHINE, HIS PRISONERS FOLLOWING.
CAPTAIN, I WON'T TELL YOU A LIE – I HAD A LOT OF LUCK!
WELL DONE, JANNO! HOW DID YOU DO IT?
IMPERIAL MAJESTY, BUT FOR THE SHEER CHANCE OF JANNO AND I BEING AT ZOOTHA WHEN THEY MADE THEIR FIRST COUP, THIS GANG OF HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED MASTER CRIMINALS COULD HAVE GONE ON ALMOST INDEFINITELY. HAPPILY, THEY ARE NOW BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.

LXX

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE BATTLE FOR SURVIVAL

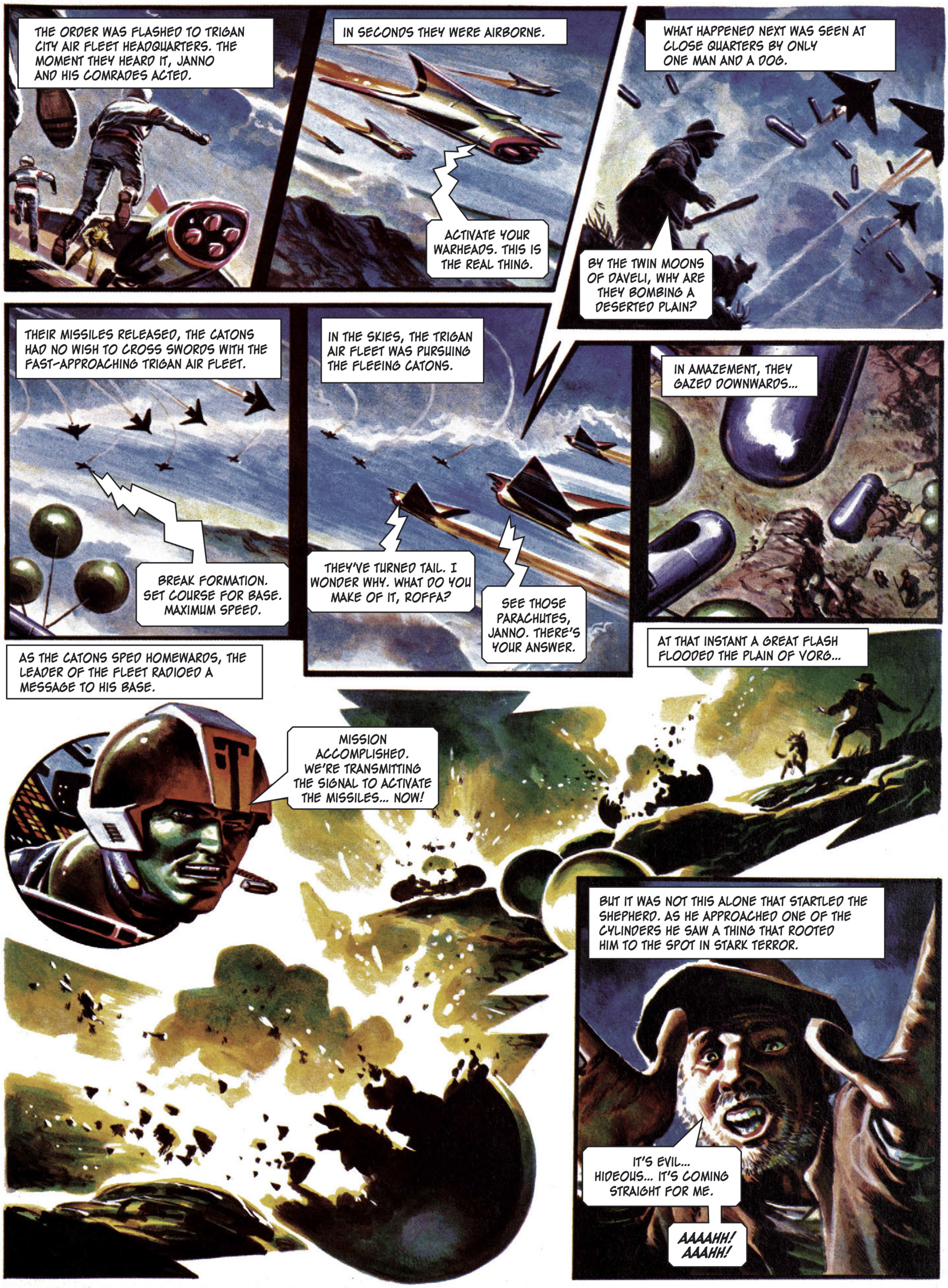
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 826 - 833

12th November – 31st December 1977

Story by Jack Parker

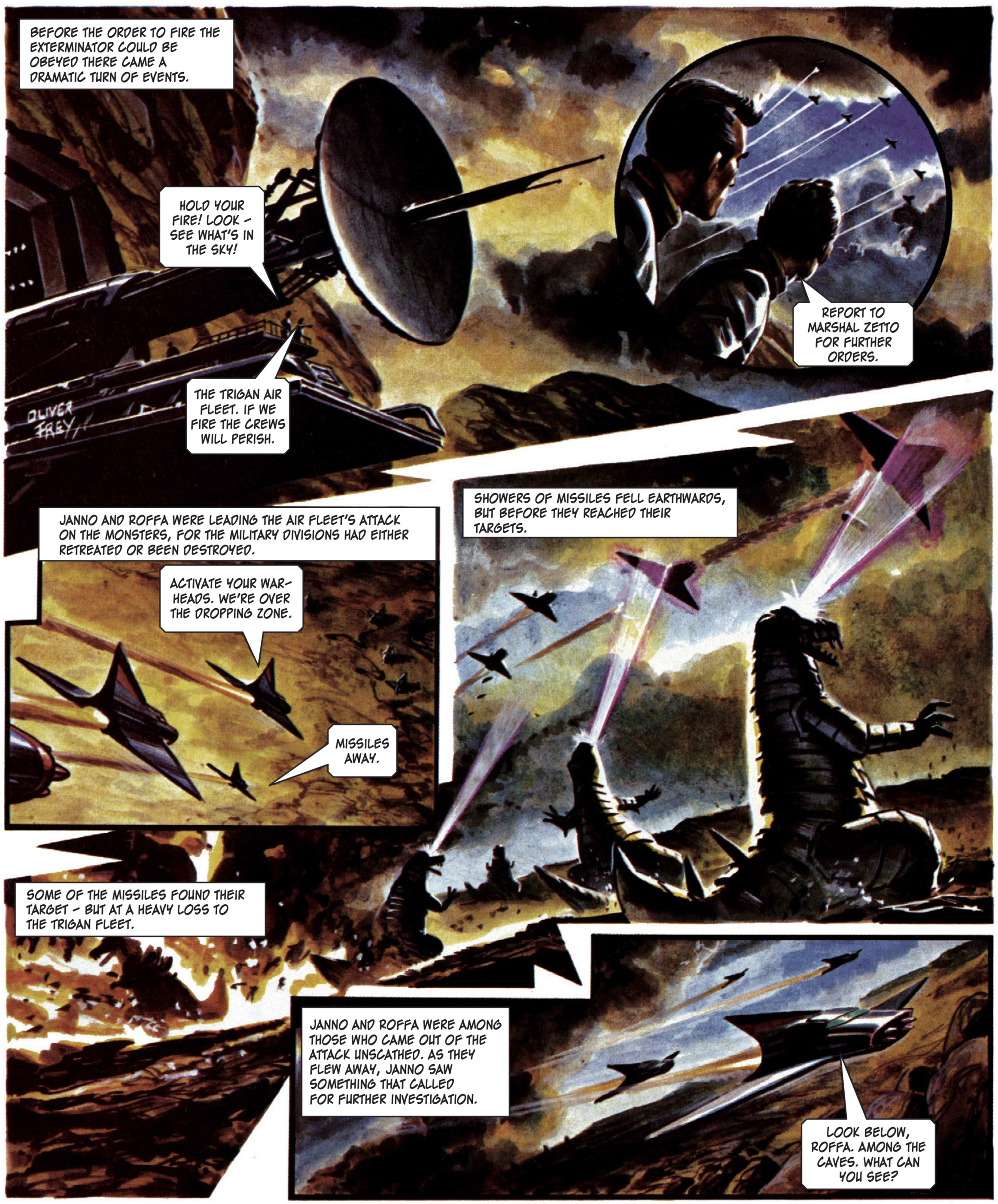
Art by Oliver Frey

IT WAS THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE EMPIRE'S FOUNDATION AND THE NATION'S MILITARY MIGHT WAS PARADED BEFORE THE EMPEROR TRIGO AND HIS PEOPLE.
THE ARMED MIGHT OF MY EMPIRE. I PRAY IT WILL NEVER BE USED IN ANGER, MARSHAL ZETTO.
I SHARE YOUR HOPES TOO, EMPEROR.
OLIVER FREY
BUT IF IT IS EVER NEEDED, IT WILL DESTROY ANY WEAPON OR DEMOLISH THE DEFENCES OF ANY ENEMY. THAT I SWEAR.
DOES THIS MEAN THAT NEITHER THE CATONS NOR ANY OTHER HOSTILE FORCE CAN HOPE TO SUCCEED IN AN ATTACK UPON US? THAT WE ARE IMPREGNABLE?
IT DOES INDEED, EMPEROR.
AGAINST ANY KNOWN OPPONENTS PERHAPS. BUT WHAT OF THE UNKNOWN...?
MEANWHILE, FAR OUT ON THE VAST PLAINS OF VORG...
THE CATON WAR FLEET. WHAT DEVILRY IS THIS?
WE ARE APPROACHING THE DROPPING ZONE. PREPARE TO RELEASE MISSILES.
THE EVENT HAD NOT PASSED UNNOTICED AT TRIGAN CITY'S EARLY WARNING STATION.
RED ALERT! CATON FLEET APPROACHING FAST IN MASSED FORMATION!
TRIGO WAS ACKNOWLEDGING THE CHEERS OF THE CROWDS WHEN AN URGENT MESSAGE WAS BROUGHT TO MARSHAL ZETTO.
RED ALERT, SIR. WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
RADIO AIR HEAD-QUARTERS. ALL PLANES TO BE AIRBORNE INSTANTLY!

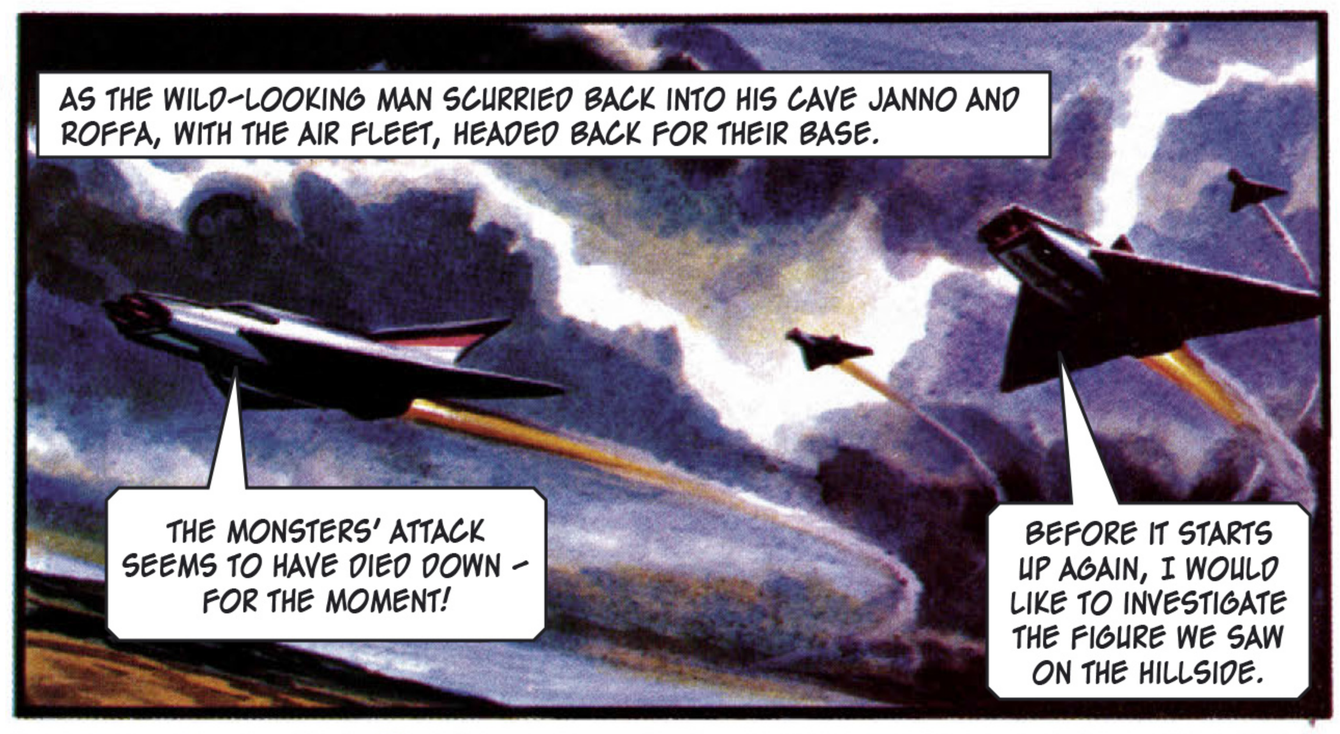

THE ORDER WAS FLASHED TO TRIGAN CITY AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS. THE MOMENT THEY HEARD IT, JANNO AND HIS COMRADES ACTED.
IN SECONDS THEY WERE AIRBORNE.
ACTIVATE YOUR WARHEADS. THIS IS THE REAL THING.
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WAS SEEN AT CLOSE QUARTERS BY ONLY ONE MAN AND A DOG.
BY THE TWIN MOONS OF DAVELI, WHY ARE THEY BOMBING A DESERTED PLAIN?
THEIR MISSILES RELEASED, THE CATONS HAD NO WISH TO CROSS SWORDS WITH THE FAST-APPROACHING TRIGAN AIR FLEET.
BREAK FORMATION. SET COURSE FOR BASE. MAXIMUM SPEED.
IN THE SKIES, THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET WAS PURSUING THE FLEEING CATONS.
THEY'VE TURNED TAIL. I WONDER WHY. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, ROFFA?
SEE THOSE PARACHUTES, JANNO. THERE'S YOUR ANSWER.
IN AMAZEMENT, THEY GAZED DOWNWARDS...
AS THE CATONS SPED HOMEWARDS, THE LEADER OF THE FLEET RADIOED A MESSAGE TO HIS BASE.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. WE'RE TRANSMITTING THE SIGNAL TO ACTIVATE THE MISSILES... NOW!
AT THAT INSTANT A GREAT FLASH FLOODED THE PLAIN OF VORG...
BUT IT WAS NOT THIS ALONE THAT STARTLED THE SHEPHERD. AS HE APPROACHED ONE OF THE CYLINDERS HE SAW A THING THAT ROOTED HIM TO THE SPOT IN STARK TERROR.
IT'S EVIL... HIDEOUS... IT'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR ME.
AAAAHH! AAAHH!

A HOVERING TRIGAN HELICOPTER'S CREW SAW THE TERRIFYING SPECTACLE.
I'M REDUCING ALTITUDE. LOWER A LINE TO RESCUE THAT POOR DEVIL.
AYE, AYE, SIR! HATCH DOORS OPEN.
AS THE HELICOPTER SWOOPED LOW OVER THE SHEPHERD, THE DOG TURNED TO DEFEND ITS MASTER.
THEIR EYES... THEY KILL WITH THEIR EYES... OH NO!
SWIFT ACTION BY THE HELICOPTER'S CREW SAVED THE SHEPHERD FROM A SIMILAR FATE TO HIS DOG'S.
THOSE FIENDS. DID YOU SEE WHAT THEY DID TO MY DOG?
YES. AND THAT'S ONLY A TASTE OF WHAT THEY'LL DO TO THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN CITY UNLESS THEY ARE STOPPED.
IF THEY CAN BE STOPPED!
MEANWHILE, JANNO AND HIS FELLOW PILOTS HAD RETURNED TO THEIR BASE. SOON A WHITE-FACED JANNO WAS REPORTING TO HIS UNCLE, THE EMPEROR TRIGO.
AN ULTIMATUM HAS BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE CATONS. THEY SAY THE MONSTERS WILL BESIEGE TRIGAN CITY AND, UNLESS WE AGREE TO THEIR DEMANDS, THEY WILL...
YES, UNCLE? WHAT WILL THEY DO?

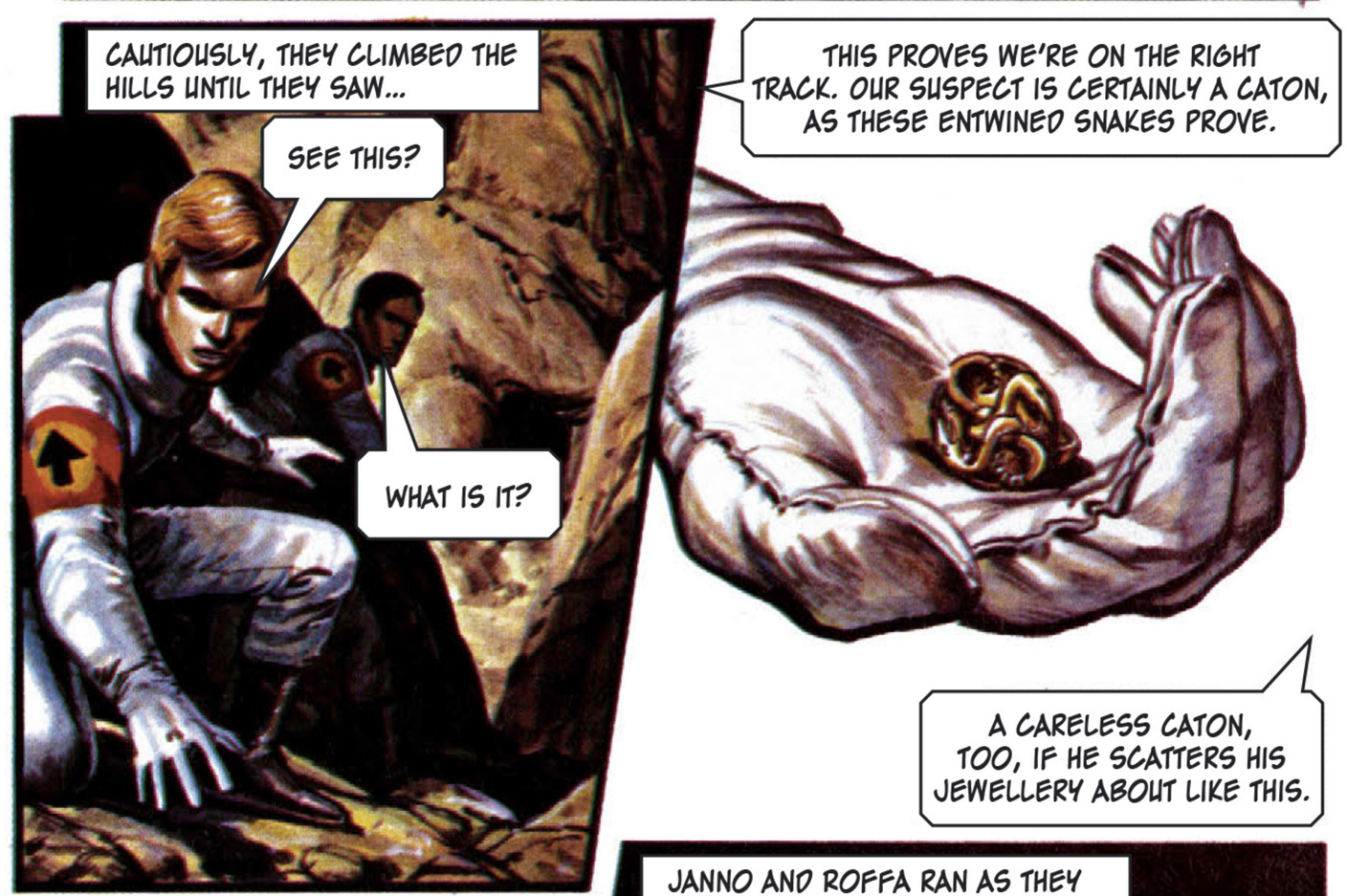
THEY WILL DESTROY THE CITY AND ALL ITS INHABITANTS.
AND WHAT ARE THEIR DEMANDS?
THAT WE SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THE CATONS AS THE GREATEST POWER ON ELEKTON AND BECOME THEIR SUBJECTS.
WE COULD NEVER AGREE TO SUCH TERMS.
I MAY HAVE TO AGREE TO THE CATONS' TERMS.
THAT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY, SIR. EVEN NOW OUR ARMOURED DIVISIONS ARE MOVING UP TO ATTACK THE MONSTERS. SEE...
THE MARSHAL TOOK TRIGO TO A VIDEO-VIEWER.
WHAT CHANCE WILL THE CATON MONSTERS HAVE AGAINST THESE, EH EMPEROR?
VERY LITTLE, I HOPE, MARSHAL ZETTO.
AS THE MARSHAL WAS SPEAKING, THE TRIGAN DEFENDERS WERE PREPARING TO MEET THEIR STRANGEST ENEMY.
FIRE!
PERMISSION TO FIRE, SIR!
A SHELL HURTLED TOWARDS THE MONSTER, BUT BEFORE IT REACHED ITS TARGET...
AAAH!
SHOOT FOR THEIR EYES... AAAH!
NOTHING, IT SEEMED, COULD HALT THE ADVANCE OF THE MONSTERS. TRIGO WAS IN CONSTANT CONSULTATION WITH HIS ADVISERS.
WE HAVE TRIED ALL OUR ORTHODOX MEANS OF DEFENCE AND FAILED. THERE IS ONLY ONE THING LEFT FOR US TO DO.
YOU MEAN, USE THE EXTERMINATOR.
IT IS THE ONLY WAY.
THEN I AGREE. ACTIVATE THE DEVICE, PERIC.
SIMULTANEOUSLY, THE STEEL DOORS OF A TRIGAN STRONGHOLD IN THE VORG MOUNTAINS WERE SLID BACK TO REVEAL...
...THE EXTERMINATOR, DESIGNED TO DESTROY ALL WITHIN ITS VAST RANGE.
IT WAS THE TRIGAN EMPIRE'S ULTIMATE DETERRENT MANNED ROUND THE CLOCK BY HIGHLY TRAINED CREWS.
REPORT WHEN THE EXTERMINATOR IS READY FOR ACTION.
IT IS READY NOW, SIR.
THEN FIRE – BEFORE THE MONSTERS KILL US ALL.


BEFORE THE ORDER TO FIRE THE EXTERMINATOR COULD BE OBEYED THERE CAME A DRAMATIC TURN OF EVENTS.
HOLD YOUR FIRE! LOOK – SEE WHAT'S IN THE SKY!
THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET. IF WE FIRE THE CREWS WILL PERISH.
REPORT TO MARSHAL ZETTO FOR FURTHER ORDERS.
OLIVER FREY
JANNO AND ROFFA WERE LEADING THE AIR FLEET'S ATTACK ON THE MONSTERS, FOR THE MILITARY DIVISIONS HAD EITHER RETREATED OR BEEN DESTROYED.
ACTIVATE YOUR WAR-HEADS. WE'RE OVER THE DROPPING ZONE.
MISSILES AWAY.
SHOWERS OF MISSILES FELL EARTHWARDS, BUT BEFORE THEY REACHED THEIR TARGETS.
SOME OF THE MISSILES FOUND THEIR TARGET – BUT AT A HEAVY LOSS TO THE TRIGAN FLEET.
JANNO AND ROFFA WERE AMONG THOSE WHO CAME OUT OF THE ATTACK UNSCATHED. AS THEY FLEW AWAY, JANNO SAW SOMETHING THAT CALLED FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION.
LOOK BELOW, ROFFA. AMONG THE CAVES. WHAT CAN YOU SEE?

ROFFA PEERED EARTHWARDS AT A STRANGE SIGHT.
MY FRIENDS, YOU HAVE SURVIVED SO FAR. BUT NOT FOR LONG!


AS THE WILD-LOOKING MAN SCURRIED BACK INTO HIS CAVE JANNO AND ROFFA, WITH THE AIR FLEET, HEADED BACK FOR THEIR BASE.
THE MONSTERS' ATTACK SEEMS TO HAVE DIED DOWN – FOR THE MOMENT!
BEFORE IT STARTS UP AGAIN, I WOULD LIKE TO INVESTIGATE THE FIGURE WE SAW ON THE HILLSIDE.

WITH PERMISSION FROM THEIR BASE, THE TWO FLYERS WHEELED AWAY AND LANDED AS NEAR AS THEY COULD TO THE SPOT WHERE THE STRANGE MAN HAD APPEARED.
DO YOU THINK THERE'S A CONNECTION BETWEEN THOSE MONSTERS AND THAT WEIRD MAN?
I THINK THERE IS. THAT MAN LOOKED LIKE A CATON TO ME.


CAUTIOUSLY, THEY CLIMBED THE HILLS UNTIL THEY SAW...
SEE THIS?
WHAT IS IT?
THIS PROVES WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. OUR SUSPECT IS CERTAINLY A CATON, AS THESE ENTWINED SNAKES PROVE.
A CARELESS CATON, TOO, IF HE SCATTERS HIS JEWELLERY ABOUT LIKE THIS.

WITH A HEAVE, THE TWO MEN ROLLED THE BOULDER AWAY FROM THE CAVE'S ENTRANCE AND CAUTIOUSLY STEPPED INSIDE. A HUM OF DISTANT MACHINERY MET THEIR EARS.
IT SOUNDS LIKE A WORK-SHOP OF SOME SORT.
BUT WHOSE... AND WHY?
BARELY HAD THE QUESTION DIED ON ROFFA'S LIPS WHEN THERE WAS A LOW RUMBLING SOUND...
QUICK! THE ENTRANCE... WE'LL NEVER ESCAPE!
RUN! WE... MIGHT...JUST... MAKE...IT!
JANNO AND ROFFA RAN AS THEY HAD NEVER BEFORE...
...NOT KNOWING WHAT THEIR FATE WOULD BE IF THEY FAILED.

JANNO AND ROFFA FLUNG THEMSELVES AT THE CAVE ENTRANCE.
A TRAP – AND WE FELL FOR IT!
YOU MEAN THAT WE WERE INTENDED TO FIND THIS CAVE?
WHAT FOOLS WE WERE. THE MAN WHO STOOD OUTSIDE THE CAVE... THE RING WE FOUND ON THE GROUND. THEY WERE MEANT TO LURE US HERE.
OLIVER FREY
A FOOTSTEP MADE THEM WHIRL ROUND.
ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I AM THORG LADA. YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF ME.
I BELIEVE SO. WEREN'T YOU ONCE..?
YES. I WAS ONCE A COLLEAGUE OF YOUR SCIENTIST, PERIC. BUT WE HAVE SINCE GONE OUR SEPARATE WAYS BECAUSE OUR IDEAS ON THE PURPOSE OF SCIENCE DIFFER. PERIC BELIEVES IN THE USE OF SCIENCE FOR PEACE. BUT FOR ME IT IS THE PATHWAY TO POWER. FOLLOW ME AND YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.
WITH INCREASING APPREHENSION, JANNO AND ROFFA FOLLOWED THE SCIENTIST ALONG THE CORRIDOR.
HOW CAN SCIENCE GIVE YOU POWER?
IT IS DOING SO ALREADY. YOU HAVE MET MY OBEDIENT SLAVES, I BELIEVE.
THOSE MONSTERS... ARE YOUR SLAVES?

IN ACQUIRING THIS POWER FOR THEIR MASTER, THE MONSTERS KNEW NO MERCY.
THEY ARE. I DESIGNED THEM AND THEY OBEY ALL MY COMMANDS. THEY WILL GIVE ME THE POWER I INTEND TO POSSESS.
WHY DOESN'T THE ARMY DRIVE THEM BACK?
SAVE US FROM THESE FIENDS.
NOTHING ON THIS PLANET CAN COMBAT THESE MONSTERS. WE ARE DOOMED!
AND DOOMED WAS WHAT TRIGAN CITY REALLY SEEMED TO BE. IN HIS MILITARY OPERATIONS ROOM, THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS IN CONSTANT CONSULTATION WITH PERIC AND MARSHAL ZETTO.
OUR ARMY AND OUR AIR FLEET ARE HELPLESS AGAINST THESE MONSTERS. CAN WE USE THE EXTERMINATOR AGAIN?
THE MONSTERS HAVE DEALT WITH THIS, EXCELLENCY. THEY CAME AT DAWN AND...
AS THE MARSHAL CONTINUED HIS NARRATIVE, TRIGO COULD SEE IN HIS MIND'S EYE...
...DESTROYED THE TRIGAN EMPIRE'S MOST POTENT WEAPON. NOW WE ARE UNPROTECTED. THERE IS NO ESCAPE.
AS TRIGO PACED UP AND DOWN IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS ROOM, THE VIDEOVIEWER FLASHED ON...
TWO ATMOSPHERE CRAFT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET HAVE BEEN FOUND ABANDONED ON THE PLAINS OF VORG. THERE IS NO TRACE OF THE PILOTS. THE PLANES' IDENTIFICATION MARKS FOLLOW.
AS HE WATCHED THE IDENTIFYING SYMBOLS FLASH ON TO THE SCREEN, TRIGO GASPED.
THOSE ARE THE MARKS OF ROFFA AND JANNO'S PLANES. I WANT THOSE TWO PILOTS FOUND AT ONCE. NO EFFORT MUST BE SPARED, DO YOU HEAR?
AT ONCE, EXCELLENCY.
AS TRIGO WAS SPEAKING, THE VIDEOVIEWER OPERATOR NEARLY LEAPT OUT OF HIS SKIN.
THIS MESSAGE IS FOR YOU, EXCELLENCY. THERE'S A MAN ON THE LINE... SAYS HE'S SPEAKING WITH A GUN AT HIS TEMPLE, EXCELLENCY. IT'S...IT'S...IT'S!
WHEN THE OPERATOR SPOKE THE NAME IT BROUGHT A CHILL OF HORROR TO TRIGO'S BROW.

IT CAME FROM...
LISTEN UNCLE. I'M IN THE POWER OF THORG LADA. THE MONSTERS ATTACKING TRIGAN ARE HIS. HE'LL CALL THEM OFF ON ONE CONDITION.
WHAT IS THAT CONDITION?
OLIVER FREY
THE PRICE OF PEACE IS VERY HIGH BUT IT IS ONE YOU MUST PAY. IT IS PERIC'S TOTAL SURRENDER TO THORG LADA. YOU HAVE AN HOUR TO DECIDE. A ROBOT CRAFT WILL ARRIVE THEN TO FETCH HIM.
TRIGO TURNED HIS SHOCKED FACE TOWARDS TRIGAN'S REVERED SCIENTIST.
THORG LADA! WHO IS HE? HAVE YOU HEARD OF HIM, PERIC?
I KNOW HIM OF OLD. HE IS A FORMER ASSISTANT OF MINE. I DISCOVERED THAT HE WAS SELLING OUR SECRETS TO THE CATONS AND DISMISSED HIM.
PERIC AND MARSHAL ZETTO WATCHED HELPLESSLY AS TRIGO PACED THE ROOM IN DEEP THOUGHT.
WE'LL BLAST THE MOUNTAIN APART AND DESTROY THE FIEND.
AND KILL JANNO AND ROFFA. PEACE IS OUR DESIRE, YES. BUT NOT AT THIS PRICE.
I AM WILLING TO GO, EXCELLENCY.
BUT I WILL NOT GO AS A SACRIFICE. I KNOW THORG LADA OF OLD. IT WILL BE A BATTLE OF MY BRAINS AGAINST HIS – AND I THINK I KNOW WHO WILL WIN.

MEANWHILE, IN HIS SECRET LABORATORY THORG LADA WAS TRIUMPHANT.
WHAT ABOUT THE BEAST, MASTER? WILL THEY SHARE THEIR PRISON WITH IT?
I THINK NOT.
LADA PRESSED A BUTTON AND...
THIS IS A DISINTEGRATOR, MY FRIENDS. AND IT WORKS JUST AS WELL WITH TRIGANS. SO TAKE CARE NOT TO THWART MY WILL.
ONCE IN THEIR PRISON, JANNO AND ROFFA WERE HELPLESS.
THE ATTACK ON TRIGAN CITY IS TO CEASE. THE WARRIORS BESIEGING THE CITY ARE TO MAINTAIN THE SIEGE UNTIL FURTHER ORDERS.
YOUR WORDS ARE LAW, MASTER.
RADIO WAVES FROM THE CAVE BEAMED THE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE MONSTERS' ELECTRONIC BRAINS.
MUMMY! WHY HAVE THE MONSTERS STOPPED? AREN'T THEY GOING TO BREAK UP ANY MORE SHOPS?
RUINED! I'M RUINED!
ALL MY SAVINGS TURNED TO RUBBLE.
THE MONSTERS RINGED THE CITY LIKE IMMOBILE BUT EVER WATCHFUL SENTINELS WHILE A ROBOT ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FLEW ABOVE THEM...
...ITS DESTINATION – THE TRIGAN FLEET'S MILITARY AIRFIELD.
PERIC AND TRIGO ARRIVED AT THE AIRFIELD AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT.
NOW THAT YOU HAVE SEEN THIS INCREDIBLE ROBOT CRAFT, HAVE YOU STILL THE COURAGE TO TRUST YOUR LIFE TO IT?
IF THE PRICE OF MY LIFE IS THE DEATH OF THE EMPIRE, THEN MY CHOICE IS EASY. I SHALL COME BACK, EXCELLENCY. YOU SHALL SEE!
WITHOUT A BACKWARD GLANCE, PERIC WENT ABOARD THE FLYING ROBOT...
...WHICH TOOK OFF FOR ITS SECRET DESTINATION.
SOON WE WILL MEET AGAIN, THORG LADA AND I. I AS A HOSTAGE FOR THE EMPIRE'S SAFETY AND HE AS MY CAPTOR. I VERY MUCH FEAR THAT LADA, IN HIS LUST FOR POWER, WILL SOON BE MAKING DEMANDS THAT ARE LESS EASILY SATISFIED. I WONDER WHAT THEY WILL BE?

PERIC FOUND A STRANGE RECEPTION COMMITTEE AWAITING HIM IN THE VORG HILLS.
GLADLY. I WAS PERSUADED AGAINST MY WILL TO BRING IT. A MAN OF PEACE HAS NO NEED OF WEAPONS.
COME! OUR MASTER AWAITS YOU!
A WEAPON HAS BEEN DETECTED UPON YOU. DISARM YOURSELF.
OLIVER FREY
REMEMBER THIS DISINTEGRATOR, PERIC? WE DESIGNED IT WHEN I WAS YOUR ASSISTANT IN TRIGAN CITY.
AN INFERNAL DEVICE. ITS INVENTION WAS CHIEFLY YOUR WORK, AS I REMEMBER!
AND NOW IT CONTAINS TWO OF TRIGO'S CLOSEST FRIENDS. I COULD FREE THEM OR KILL THEM... THE CHOICE IS YOURS!
YOU HAVE PLACED A PRICE ON THEIR FREEDOM, I PRESUME?
I DEMAND THE COMPLETE SURRENDER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE TO THE CATONS. AND I REQUIRE THAT I SHALL BE MADE LEADER OF THE ENTIRE EMPIRE.
AND WHAT IF THE EMPEROR TRIGO IGNORES YOUR DEMANDS?
HE WILL NOT IGNORE THEM WHEN HE KNOWS THAT BY PULLING THIS LEVER I CAN DESTROY TWO OF HIS KEY MEN.
MEANWHILE, A TRIGAN TRACKER CRAFT HAD TRAILED PERIC'S VEHICLE TO LADA'S LAIR.
ZHA TO AIR FLEET HEAD-QUARTERS. CATON ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LOCATED. POSITION AS ON FLEET MAP.

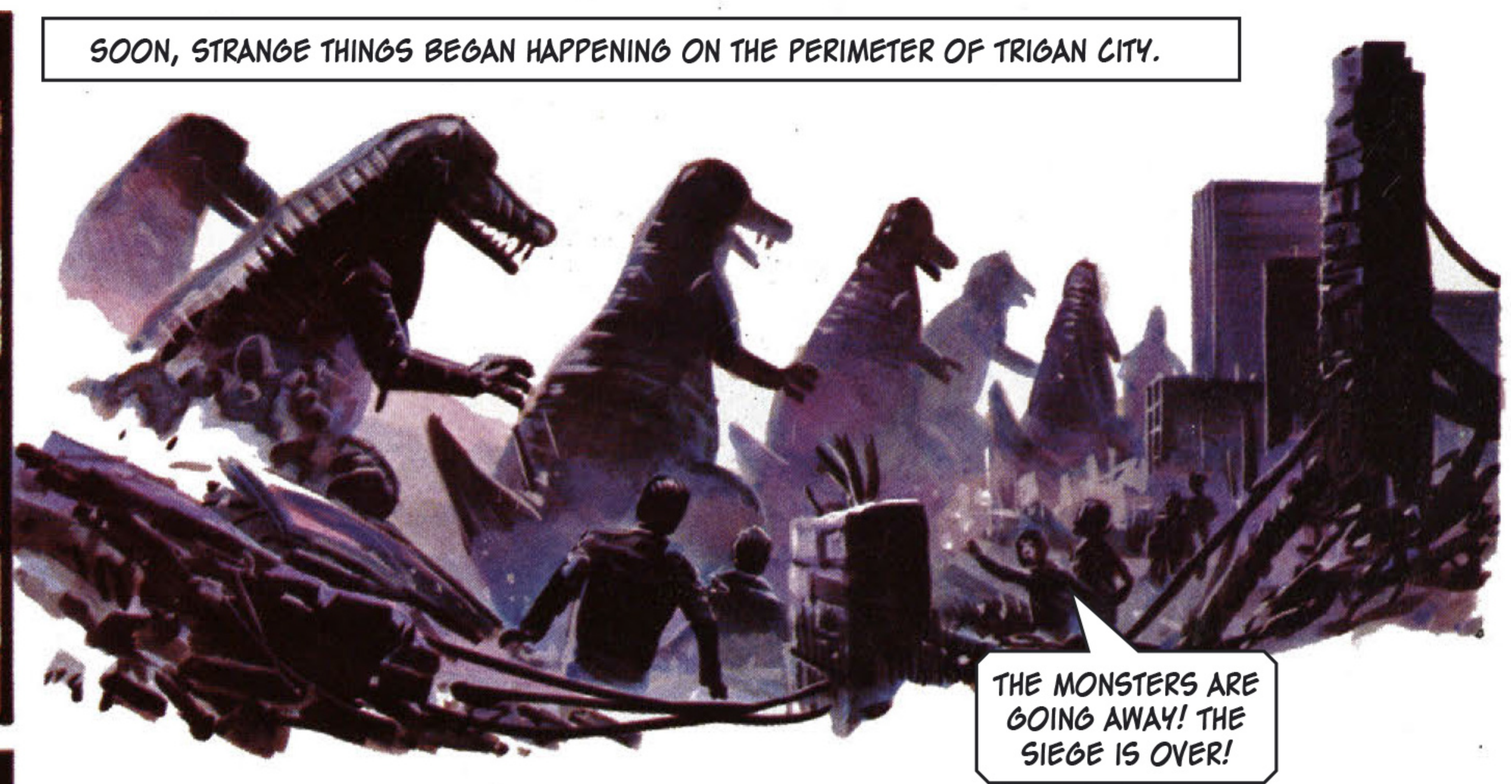
GRIMLY, MARSHAL ZETTO RECEIVED THE PILOT'S MESSAGE.
KEEP THE HIDEOUT UNDER CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE. ON NO ACCOUNT TRY ANY HEROICS. MORE LIVES THAN YOURS ARE AT STAKE!
AFTER THE MESSAGE HAD BEEN PASSED TO THE PILOT, TRIGO GAVE HIS ORDERS TO THE MARSHAL.
I WANT EVERY PLANE READIED FOR TAKE-OFF. TROOPS AND TRANSPORT AT RED ALERT. WHEN THE TIME COMES, WE SHALL HAVE TO ACT - FAST!
AT THE AIR FLEET HEADQUARTERS, THE CREWS HEARD THE ANNOUNCEMENT OVER THEIR PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM.
I THINK I'M GOING TO NEED THIS PLANE AGAIN IN A HURRY, SERGEANT. HOW LONG BEFORE IT'S READY?
IT WILL BE READY JUST AS SOON AS YOU REQUIRE IT SIR, HAVE NO FEAR.
UNAWARE OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS, A RADIO HAM WORKING IN HIS SHACK ON THE CITY OUTSKIRTS MADE A SURPRISING DISCOVERY...
I'VE FOUND IT... THE FREQUENCY THAT CONTROLS THE MONSTERS, EUREKA!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. IT'S INCREDIBLE. I'VE FOUND THE CATON'S FREQUENCY... I KNOW HOW THEIR MONSTER WARRIORS ARE DIRECTED.
NOW TO PUT MY THEORY TO THE TEST. A BURST OF POWER ON FIFTY MEGATRIGS SHOULD DO THE TRICK. NOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN?
SECONDS LATER, THE RADIO HAM RECEIVED HIS ANSWER...
BY THE TWIN MOONS OF DAVELI, IT WORKS.

AS THE MONSTER CAME TOWARDS HIM, THE HAM LUNGED FOR HIS TRANSMITTER SWITCH.
I CAN STOP YOUR TRICKS...
...WITH THE FLICK OF A SWITCH!
OLIVER FREY
THE INSTANT THE TRANSMISSION CEASED, THE MONSTER FROZE.
SO MUCH FOR THE TERROR OF THE CATONS. I MUST TELL THE EMPEROR ABOUT THIS.
IN THE VORG HILLS, WARNING LIGHTS BEGAN FLASHING ON LADA'S SENSITIVE EQUIPMENT.
THERE IS AN ALIEN SIGNAL ON THE WARRIORS' FREQUENCY. I WARNED YOU AGAINST ANY TRICKS, PERIC.
IT IS A FREAK ELECTRICAL DISTURBANCE. THERE ARE MANY AT THIS SEASON. NOW LET ME CONTACT TRIGO!
LADA AGREED TO PERIC'S REQUEST AND LED HIM TO HIS COMMUNICATOR DOME.
GREETINGS, EMPEROR. LADA'S CONDITIONS FOR THE FREEDOM OF JANNO AND ROFFA ARE THESE. HE IS TO BE PROCLAIMED EMPEROR AND THE CATONS ARE TO POSSESS THE EMPIRE.

AS TRIGO LISTENED, AN EXCITED VISITOR WAS BROUGHT INTO THE ROOM.
BEFORE I ANSWER, I WANT AN ASSURANCE THAT ROFFA AND JANNO ARE UNHARMED AND THEN...
YOUR EXCELLENCY... PLEASE...THIS IS VITAL!
TRIGO CAUGHT THE URGENCY IN THE AIDE'S VOICE.
PERIC, I NEED A MOMENT TO CONSIDER. TELL LADA HE SHALL HAVE MY ANSWER WITHOUT DELAY.
BREAKING CONTACT WITH PERIC, TRIGO TURNED IN SOME ANNOYANCE TO THE INTRUDERS.
YOUR INTERRUPTION WAS MADE FOR A GOOD REASON, I HOPE.
YOU WILL THINK SO, EXCELLENCY, WHEN YOU HEAR THIS MAN'S STORY.
AFTER THE RADIO HAM HAD DESCRIBED HIS DISCOVERY, TRIGO'S FACE LIT UP.
THOSE MONSTERS BESIEGING TRIGAN CITY...YOU CAN MAKE THEM OBEY YOUR ORDERS?
THEY WALKED OUT OF THE PALACE BETWEEN TWO MONSTERS GUARDING THE PALACE GATES.
LADA HAS IMMOBILISED HIS MONSTERS WHILE WE TALK PEACE TERMS. A SALUTE FROM THIS FELLOW WOULD PROVIDE A SATISFACTORY DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR DISCOVERY.
AT ONCE, EXCELLENCY.
WHEN THE HAM TUNED IN HIS TRANSMITTER, THE CUMBERSOME MONSTER REARED ON ITS HIND LEGS AND...
I'M CONVINCED. CAN ALL THE MONSTERS BE CONTROLLED IN THIS WAY?
YES, EXCELLENCY. THEY ALL OPERATE ON THE SAME FREQUENCY.
AND WITH ONE POWERFUL TRANSMITTER WE CAN BECOME THE MASTERS OF THESE FIENDISH CATON INVENTIONS?
THAT IS SO, EXCELLENCY.
THEN I THINK I KNOW WHAT ANSWER TO GIVE TO THE POWER-THIRSTY THORG LADA, MY CLEVER YOUNG FRIEND. THE EMPIRE'S MOST POWERFUL TRANSMITTER IS AT YOUR SERVICE. LET US GO!

DEEP IN THE VORG HILLS, THE CATON SCIENTIST, THORG LADA, WAITED IMPATIENTLY FOR TRIGO'S REPLY TO HIS ULTIMATUM.
ONLY ONE THING WILL MAKE THE EMPEROR SPEAK. I SHALL DISINTEGRATE JANNO AND ROFFA. AND YOU SHALL BE NEXT, PERIC. TELL YOUR EMPEROR THAT!
OLIVER FREY
I SHALL BECOME EMPEROR. UNLESS TRIGO AGREES TO HAND OVER POWER TO ME I SHALL SWITCH ON THE DISINTEGRATOR. WATCH THIS, PERIC!
THE TIME LAPSE IS SET FOR NOON. UNLESS TRIGO HAS REPLIED BY THEN, OUR TWO HOSTAGES WILL DISCOVER HOW EFFECTIVE THIS DISINTEGRATOR CAN BE!
TRIGO WAS INDEED PREPARING A REPLY FOR LADA, BUT IT WAS NOT THE ONE THE MAD SCIENTIST WAS ANTICIPATING.
WE CAN TALK TO ALMOST THE ENTIRE GALAXY FROM HERE, SO I AM SURE WE CAN PUMP POWER INTO THOSE MONSTERS OF THORG LADA'S...AND MAKE THEM DO AS WE WISH!
THEY HURRIED INTO THE CONTROL ROOM.
I WANT OUR MOST POWERFUL TRANSMITTER DIRECTED ON TO THE PLAIN OF VORG, CHIEF TECHNICIAN. OUR YOUNG FRIEND HERE WILL TELL YOU THE FREQUENCY.

MEANWHILE, YOU HAVE A BATTLE TO PLAN, MARSHAL ZETTO – AND YOUR SOLDIERS ARE THOSE METAL WARRIORS ALREADY BESIEGING TRIGAN CITY.


SOON, STRANGE THINGS BEGAN HAPPENING ON THE PERIMETER OF TRIGAN CITY.
THE MONSTERS ARE GOING AWAY! THE SIEGE IS OVER!

WARNING LIGHTS FLASHING ON HIS EQUIPMENT TOLD LADA THAT AN INTERLOPER WAS OPERATING ON THE MONSTER'S FREQUENCY. IN FEAR, HE RUSHED TO THE ENTRANCE OF HIS HIDEOUT.
STOP THEM...STOP THEM... TRIGO'S CONTROLLING THEM NOW! I'M THEIR MASTER NO LONGER.
HEARING THE COMMOTION, PERIC ACTED INSTANTLY.
AFTER THE FIEND!
DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE.

LADA SWUNG ROUND IN HORROR IN TIME TO RECEIVE...
THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.
BEFORE THEY COULD GRAB HIM, LADA HAD LEAPT...
LADA'S FATE REMAINS A MYSTERY TO THIS DAY, FOR NOTHING MORE WAS SEEN OF THE POWER-HUNGRY SCIENTIST WITH AMBITIONS FOR RULING THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
LOOK! THE MONSTERS ARE SALUTING US.
I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EYES.
I THINK THIS IS TRIGO'S IDEA OF A JOKE.
AND SO ENDED ANOTHER CHAPTER IN THE EVENTFUL HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.

LXXI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

BRINKA, INTERGALACTIC SPECIAL AGENT

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 834 - 843

7th January – 11th March 1978

Story by Ken Roscoe

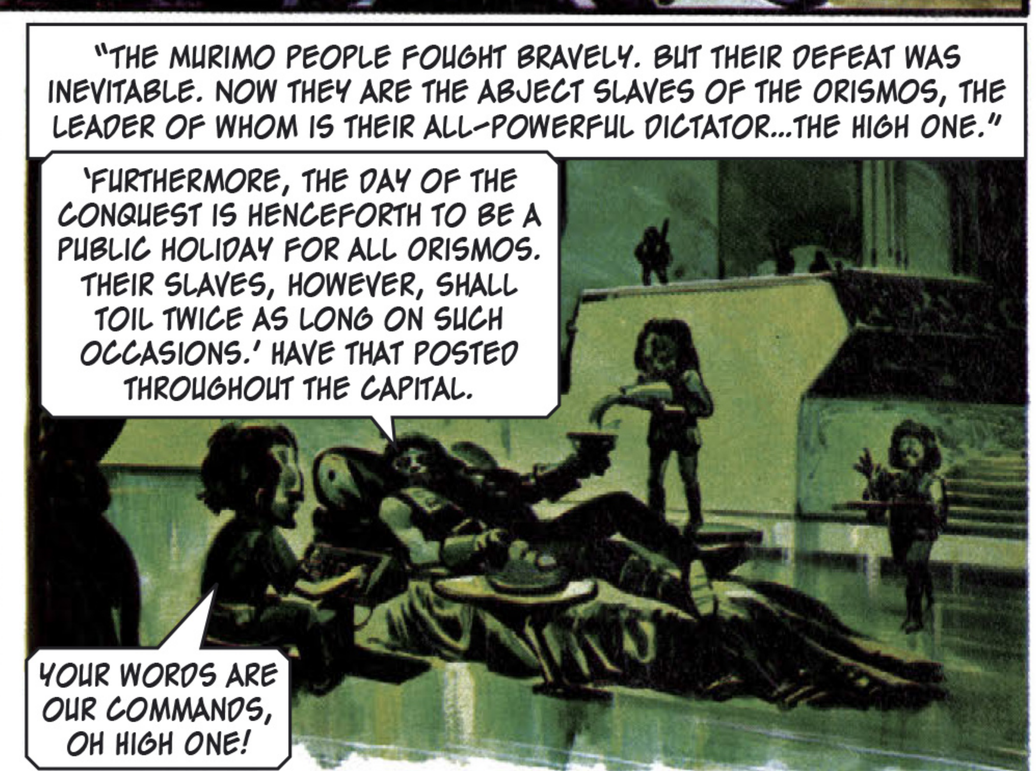
Art by Gerry Wood

THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING HAPPENING AT THE TRIGAN CITY SPACE DOCKS.
I SEE MY FRIEND BROZ IS BACK FROM ANOTHER OF HIS INTERPLANETARY TRIPS.
MUST BE AN EXCITING LIFE. TRAVELLING FROM ONE PLACE TO ANOTHER THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY BUYING AND SELLING GOODS.
SEEING PERIC, BROZ HURRIED TOWARDS HIM.
WE MEET AGAIN, MY OLD FRIEND. I'VE A FINE TALE TO TELL OF MY TRAVELS THAT WILL MAKE EVEN YOUR VENERABLE HAIR STAND ON END, PERIC.
GREETINGS TO YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER. HERE IS BRINKA WHOM YOU KNOW WELL. NOW LET US GO TO THE EMPEROR WHO AWAITS YOUR ARRIVAL EAGERLY.
AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT TOOK THEM TO THE EMPEROR'S PALACE, WHERE BROZ HAS A SURPRISE TO SPRING.
TO THIS LITTLE MACHINE, GENTLEMEN, YOUR THOUGHTS ARE SECRET NO LONGER. I'LL SWITCH IT ON. LISTEN!
FOR LONG HAVE I STRIVEN TO MAKE ONE OF THESE.
THOSE WERE YOUR THOUGHTS, PERIC, I'LL BE BOUND.
BY ALL THE STARS, A POCKET THOUGHT-READER. SOME CROOKS I KNOW WOULD GIVE A FORTUNE FOR ONE OF THOSE.
SUCH NOVELTIES ARE TRIFLES TO THE PEOPLE OF THE PLANET MURIMO FAR OUT IN THE VASTNESS OF THE GALAXY. THEY ARE A RACE OF PEOPLE WHOSE BRAINPOWER SURPASSES THAT OF ANY KNOWN GENIUS. THEY HAVE GAINED THEIR BRAINS AT THE EXPENSE OF THEIR STATURE, FOR THEY ARE WEAK IN BODY. BECAUSE OF THIS, THEY HAVE CHARGED ME WITH A MISSION. LET ME EXPLAIN.
"THE PEOPLE OF MURIMO WERE LIVING IN A PARADISE. THEY DESIGNED BEAUTIFUL CITIES AND BUILT ROBOTS TO SERVE THEM."

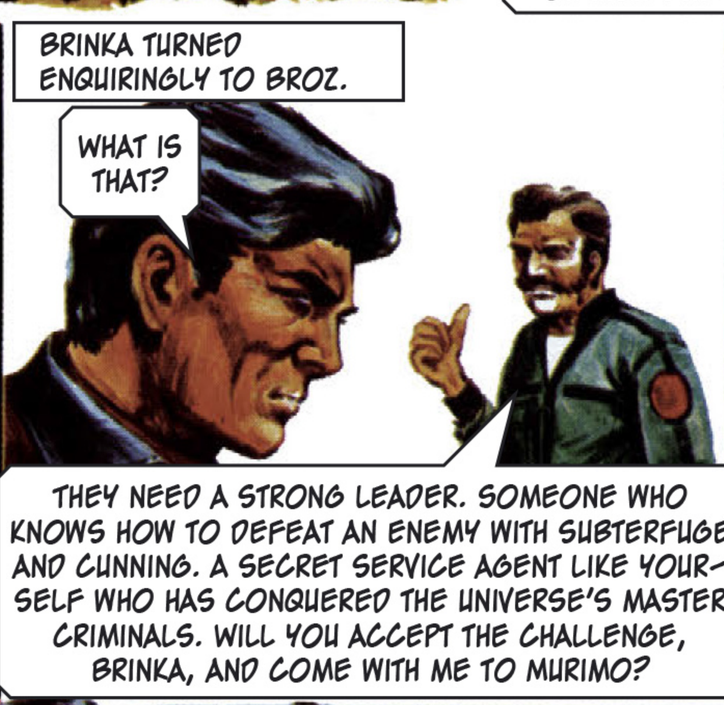
"THESE HIGHLY INVENTIVE PEOPLE WERE HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS UNTIL ONE DAY THEIR PLANET'S ORBIT CROSSED THAT OF THEIR NEIGHBOUR IN SPACE...ORISMO."
ORISMO! IT'S TRAPPED IN OUR GRAVITY FIELD. IF IT COLLIDES WITH US IT WILL BE THE END OF OUR WORLD.

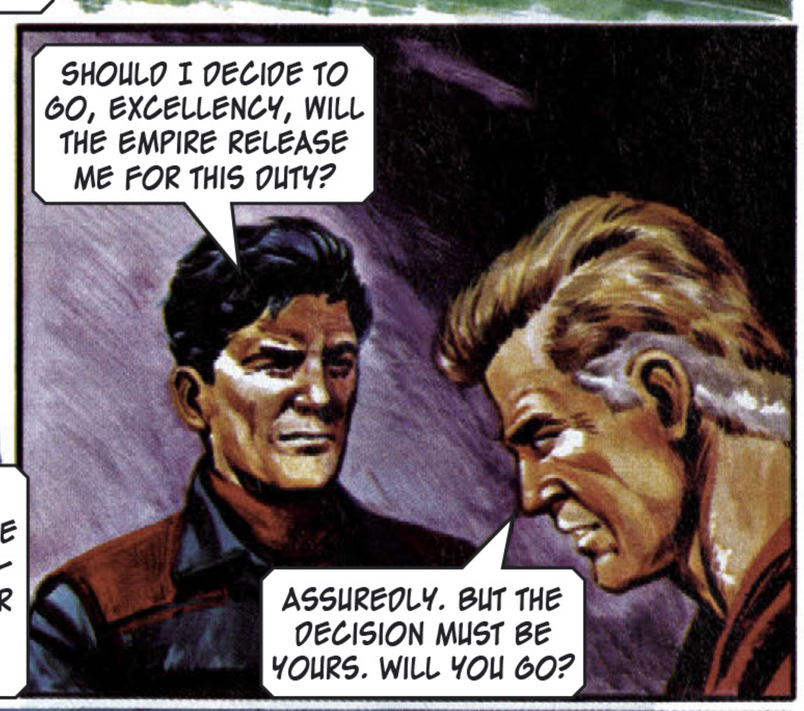
"THEIR TWO WORLDS DID NOT COLLIDE, BUT THE CLOSENESS OF THE ALIEN PLANET LED TO A STRANGE INVASION FROM ORISMO."
TAKE PRISONERS. DO NOT KILL WITHOUT PERMISSION. WE ARE TO ENSLAVE THE POPULACE. THOSE ARE THE ORDERS OF THE HIGH ONE!

"BECAUSE THEY HAD USED THEIR POWERS OF INVENTION FOR THE PURPOSES OF PEACE, THE PEOPLE OF MURIMO HAD TO MEET THEIR INVADERS WITH OUTDATED WEAPONS."
FATE HAS BROUGHT OUR TWO WORLDS TOGETHER. FATE HAS GIVEN STRENGTH TO US AND WEAKNESS TO YOU. YOU SHALL BE OUR SLAVES. SO RULES THE HIGH ONE.


"THE MURIMO PEOPLE FOUGHT BRAVELY. BUT THEIR DEFEAT WAS INEVITABLE. NOW THEY ARE THE ABJECT SLAVES OF THE ORISMOS, THE LEADER OF WHOM IS THEIR ALL-POWERFUL DICTATOR...THE HIGH ONE."
'FURTHERMORE, THE DAY OF THE CONQUEST IS HENCEFORTH TO BE A PUBLIC HOLIDAY FOR ALL ORISMOS. THEIR SLAVES, HOWEVER, SHALL TOIL TWICE AS LONG ON SUCH OCCASIONS.' HAVE THAT POSTED THROUGHOUT THE CAPITAL.
YOUR WORDS ARE OUR COMMANDS, OH HIGH ONE!

BROZ CONTINUED HIS STORY.
FOR MANY MOONS NOW THE MURIMOS HAVE SMOULDERED UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP OF THEIR FOREIGN INVADERS. NOW THEY ARE PLANNING THEIR FREEDOM. HOWEVER, THEY LACK ONE THING.


BRINKA TURNED ENQUIRINGLY TO BROZ.
WHAT IS THAT?
THEY NEED A STRONG LEADER. SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HOW TO DEFEAT AN ENEMY WITH SUBTERFUGE AND CUNNING. A SECRET SERVICE AGENT LIKE YOURSELF WHO HAS CONQUERED THE UNIVERSE'S MASTER CRIMINALS. WILL YOU ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE, BRINKA, AND COME WITH ME TO MURIMO?


SHOULD I DECIDE TO GO, EXCELLENCY, WILL THE EMPIRE RELEASE ME FOR THIS DUTY?
ASSUREDLY. BUT THE DECISION MUST BE YOURS. WILL YOU GO?

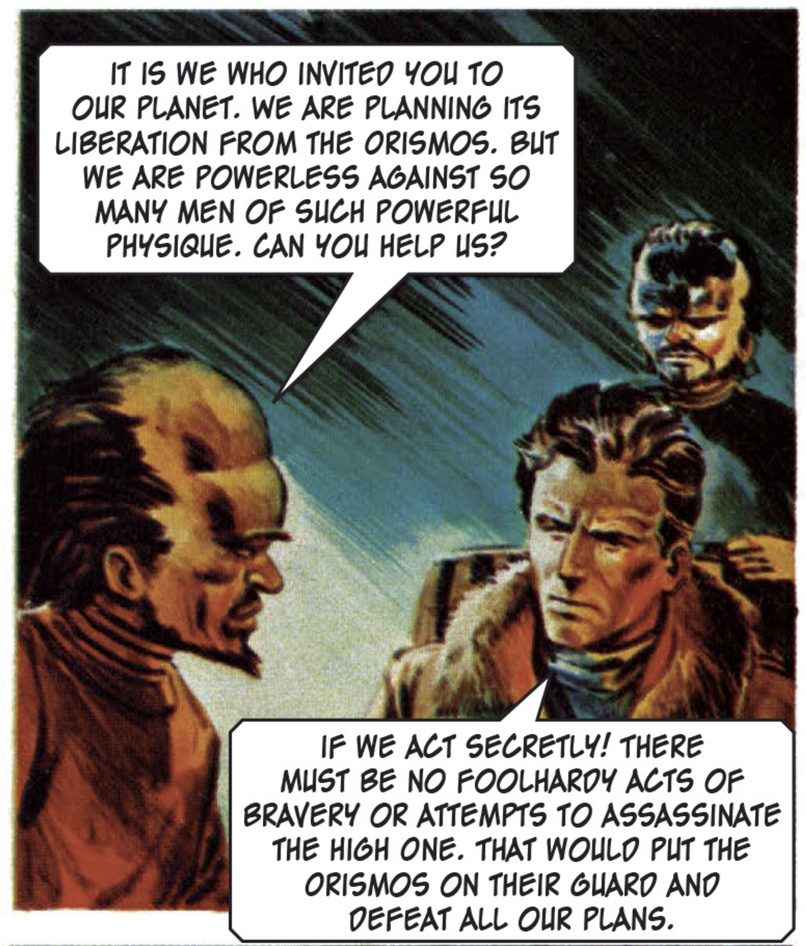
NEXT MORNING, AS SUNLIGHT SUFFUSED ACROSS THE SPACE PORT, A FIGURE HURRIED TOWARDS THE WAITING BROZ.
IT WAS BRINKA, READY TO BEGIN THE GREATEST ADVENTURE OF HIS LIFE.

SUNRISE AT THE TRIGAN SPACE PORT SAW THE START OF A GREAT ADVENTURE.
THIS OLD CRAFT WOULD TAKE MANY LIFETIMES TO CROSS THE GALAXY. BUT THE MURIMOS HAVE TAUGHT ME A TIME-SAVING TRICK. WATCH!
ALL CONTROLS ADJUSTED FOR THE SPACE LEAP, DAD.
WATCH THIS, BROZ. I SET THE COURSE. SWITCH ON THE AUTOMATIC PILOT. PUSH THIS BUTTON, AND...
A SUDDEN FLASH...AND THE WHOLE UNIVERSE SEEMED TO SPIN CRAZILY AROUND BROZ'S BATTERED CRAFT.
EVER BEEN ON A SPACE LEAP BEFORE, BRINKA?
IS THAT WHAT YOU CALL THIS GIDDY MERRY-GO-ROUND?
YOU'VE JUST MADE A SPACE JUMP FROM ONE END OF THE GALAXY TO THE OTHER AT THE SPEED OF THOUGHT. SAVES A LOT OF TIME.
DADDY! YOU SHOULD HAVE WARNED MR. BRINKA WHAT TO EXPECT.
I'M SURPRISED WE DIDN'T HIT SOMETHING.
BRINKA LOOKED OUT OF THE PORTHOLE AND SAW...
SO THAT IS MURIMO, THE PLANET OF THE SLAVES, RULED BY THE CONQUERING ORISMOS.
IF YOU ARE TO FREE THEM, YOU MUST PLAY YOUR PART WELL. THE ORISMOS MUST NEVER SUSPECT YOUR PURPOSE.
SPACE WARFARE IS NEW TO ME, BUT INTERGALACTIC ESPIONAGE IS NOT, AS THE ORISMOS WILL DISCOVER IN DUE COURSE.

WHEREVER ONE WENT ON MURIMO, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ESCAPE FROM THE APPARITION WHICH FILLED THE SKY AND CAST A GREY SHADOW ACROSS THE LAND – THE INVADERS' PLANET... ORISMO.
MURIMO IS MY TRADING BASE. IT IS HANDY FOR ME, AND SHOULD BE HANDY FOR YOU, TOO!
BROZ BOUGHT AND SOLD HIS GOODS IN THE MARKETS OF THE PLANETS HE VISITED. AND IT WAS TO SUCH A PLACE THAT HE TOOK BRINKA.
THE PLAN IS FOR US TO TRADE NORMALLY AND WAIT FOR THE MURIMO RESISTANCE WORKERS TO CONTACT US.
UNLESS THE ORISMOS GET TO US FIRST.
ROLL UP FOLKS. RARE TRIGAN TREASURES AT GIVE-AWAY PRICES.
WONDERS FROM THE FAR REACHES OF THE GALAXY. WHERE ELSE HAVE YOU SEEN SUCH VALUE?
BRINKA PLAYED HIS PART WELL, WONDERING WHAT HIS NEXT MOVE WOULD BE.
RARE KREED CRESTS FROM THE VORG PLAINS. WHO WILL BUY?
WHO IS THE STRANGER?
HE IS BUT A MOMENT ARRIVED FROM THE OUTER GALAXY. A NEW TRADER IT APPEARS.
SUDDENLY, LIKE A SHADOW, THE LITTLE MAN SLIPPED AWAY. THAT NIGHT, WHEN BROZ WAS TAKING BRINKA TO HIS APARTMENT...
COINS TO THE TOTAL SHOWN ON THE METER ARE TO BE PLACED IN THE SLOT.
MY FLAT IS YOURS DURING YOUR STAY HERE, BRINKA.
THANKS. I'M READY FOR A NIGHT'S REST.
BRINKA. SO THAT'S THE GREAT BRINKA, THE INTERGALACTIC INVESTIGATOR. WE SHALL SEE MORE OF EACH OTHER, HE AND I.
FROM THAT MOMENT ON, WHEREVER BRINKA WENT...
A POTENTIAL CUSTOMER? I WONDER. OR HAS YOUR PRESENCE HERE ANOTHER PURPOSE?
FAST THOUGH THE LITTLE MAN RAN, HE DID NOT GET FAR...
START TALKING... AND QUICKLY.
DON'T HURT ME, PLEASE. I CAN EXPLAIN.
I'M READY FOR YOUR EXPLANATION. IT HAD BETTER BE A GOOD ONE...OR ELSE!

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN FOLLOWING ME? THERE MUST BE A REASON.
THERE IS A REASON. YOU SHALL KNOW IT SOON.
WITH A SHRIEK OF ITS SIREN, THE ROBOT TRAIN BORE DOWN UPON THEM.
JUMP FOR YOUR LIVES.
JUST IN TIME, BRINKA LEAPT CLEAR.
PHEW! THAT WAS A CLOSE SHAVE.
WHEN BRINKA TURNED TO FACE HIS ADVERSARY HE HAD A SHOCK.
THE TABLES HAVE BEEN TURNED. I THINK THAT BRINKA WILL NOW BE ON MY TRAIL.
BY ALL THE PLANETS, WHERE HAS THAT SLIPPERY EEL GONE TO?
BRINKA WAS NOT BEMUSED FOR LONG.
I'LL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS MYSTERY, WHATEVER THE PRICE.
ONCE INSIDE THE TUNNEL, THE MAN LEAPT OFF THE TRAIN AND...
A TRAP...AND IT LOOKS AS IF I'VE FALLEN FOR IT.

BUT THE TRAP WAS NOT OF THE KIND BRINKA WAS FEARING.
WELCOME TO OUR CIRCLE, BRINKA. ASTER HAS FINALLY BROUGHT YOU TO US, I SEE.
HE LED ME A MERRY DANCE. A GREAT ONE FOR PRANKS IS ASTER.
I ENJOYED PLAYING THE GREAT INVEST-IGATOR AT HIS OWN GAME.


IT IS WE WHO INVITED YOU TO OUR PLANET. WE ARE PLANNING ITS LIBERATION FROM THE ORISMOS. BUT WE ARE POWERLESS AGAINST SO MANY MEN OF SUCH POWERFUL PHYSIQUE. CAN YOU HELP US?
IF WE ACT SECRETLY! THERE MUST BE NO FOOLHARDY ACTS OF BRAVERY OR ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE THE HIGH ONE. THAT WOULD PUT THE ORISMOS ON THEIR GUARD AND DEFEAT ALL OUR PLANS.

EVEN AS BRINKA WAS SPEAKING, THE PEOPLE OF MURIMO WERE FEELING THE WEIGHT OF THEIR OPPRESSORS' HARSH RULE.
IT IS DECREED THAT TOMORROW, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONQUEST, SHALL BE MARKED BY COMPULSORY REJOICING. ALL TAXES LEVIED ON THE MURIMO PEOPLE SHALL BE DOUBLED AND THE CONQUERORS SHALL TAKE POSSESSION OF ALL JEWELLERY. SO RULES THE HIGH ONE.
ALL PRAISE TO THE HIGH ONE.
RUINED... WE SHALL ALL BE RUINED.

BUT THERE WERE REBELS UNCONNECTED WITH THE OFFICIAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE WHO WERE PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR THEIR LIBERTY IN A WAY OF WHICH BRINKA WOULD NOT HAVE APPROVED.
RAY DIRECTOR FITTED. GUN READY TO FIRE. NOBODY WILL SEE OR HEAR A THING.

HE IS NEARLY IN RANGE. GET READY TO FIRE. GOODBYE, HIGH ONE! IT WAS NICE TO KNOW YOU. FIRE!

THE WEAPON SENT ITS DEADLY RAY TOWARDS ITS VICTIM LIKE A SHAFT OF INVISIBLE STEEL.
SO PERISH ALL ENEMIES OF MURIMO!

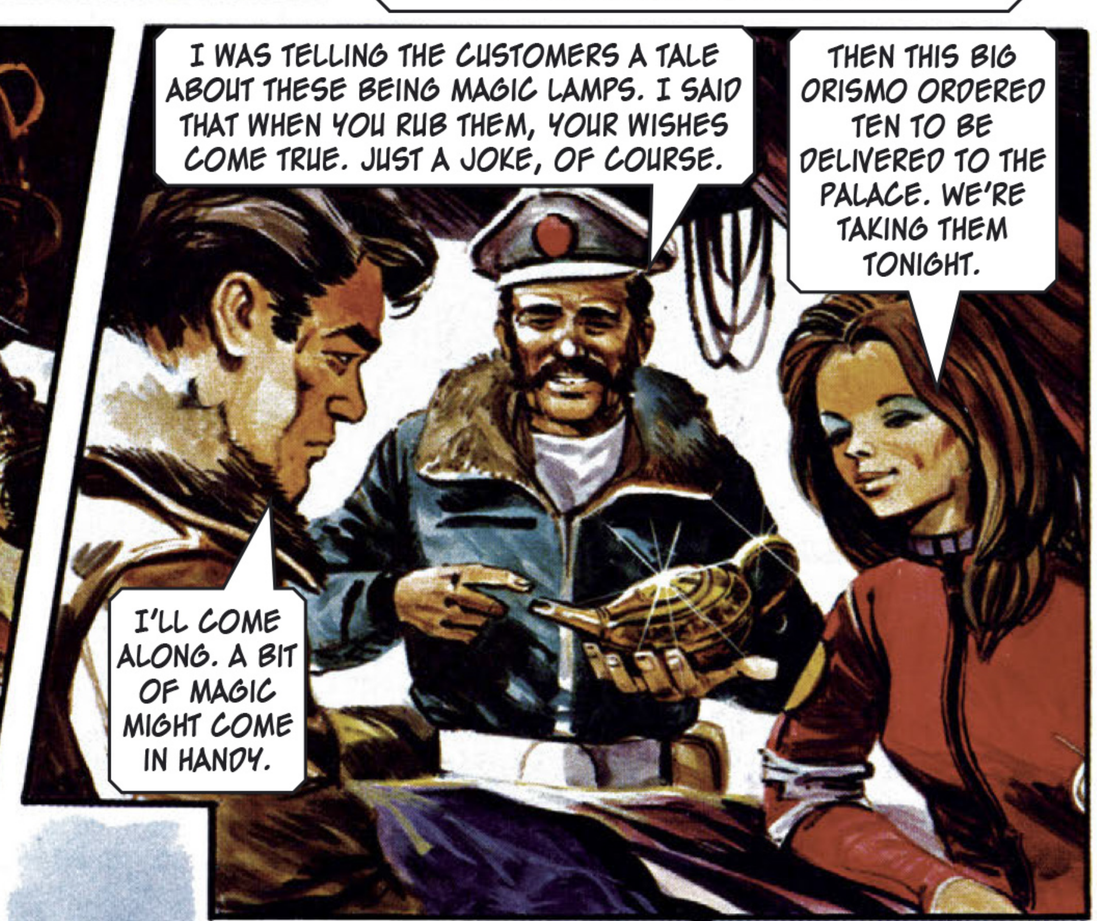
THE RAY PIERCED A PATH TO THE HIGH ONE'S HEART.
AAAAH!
HE IS DEAD. THE HIGH ONE IS NO MORE!
THE NEWS ALSO HORRIFIED BRINKA.
I WARNED AGAINST THIS. MY FEAR WAS THAT A MORE RUTHLESS LEADER WOULD ARISE.
THE REBELS WHO KILLED THE HIGH ONE ARE NOT PART OF OUR ORGANISATION.
AN AQUAPLANE TOOK THEM TO A STRANGE PLACE BENEATH THE WAVES.
WITHIN HERE IS A WORLD BEYOND THE IMAGININGS OF THE ORISMOS.
WE MUST ACT SPEEDILY. HAVE YOU A SECRET PLACE WHERE WORK CAN BE DONE?
WE HAVE AN UNDERWATER CITY WHICH THE ORISMOS HAVE NEVER DISCOVERED. I WILL TAKE YOU TO IT.
HERE WE ARE BUILDING UP OUR ARMAMENTS TO OVERTHROW THE ORISMOS. BUT OUR KNOWLEDGE OF WEAPONS IS SADLY DEFICIENT FOR WE ARE A PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE.

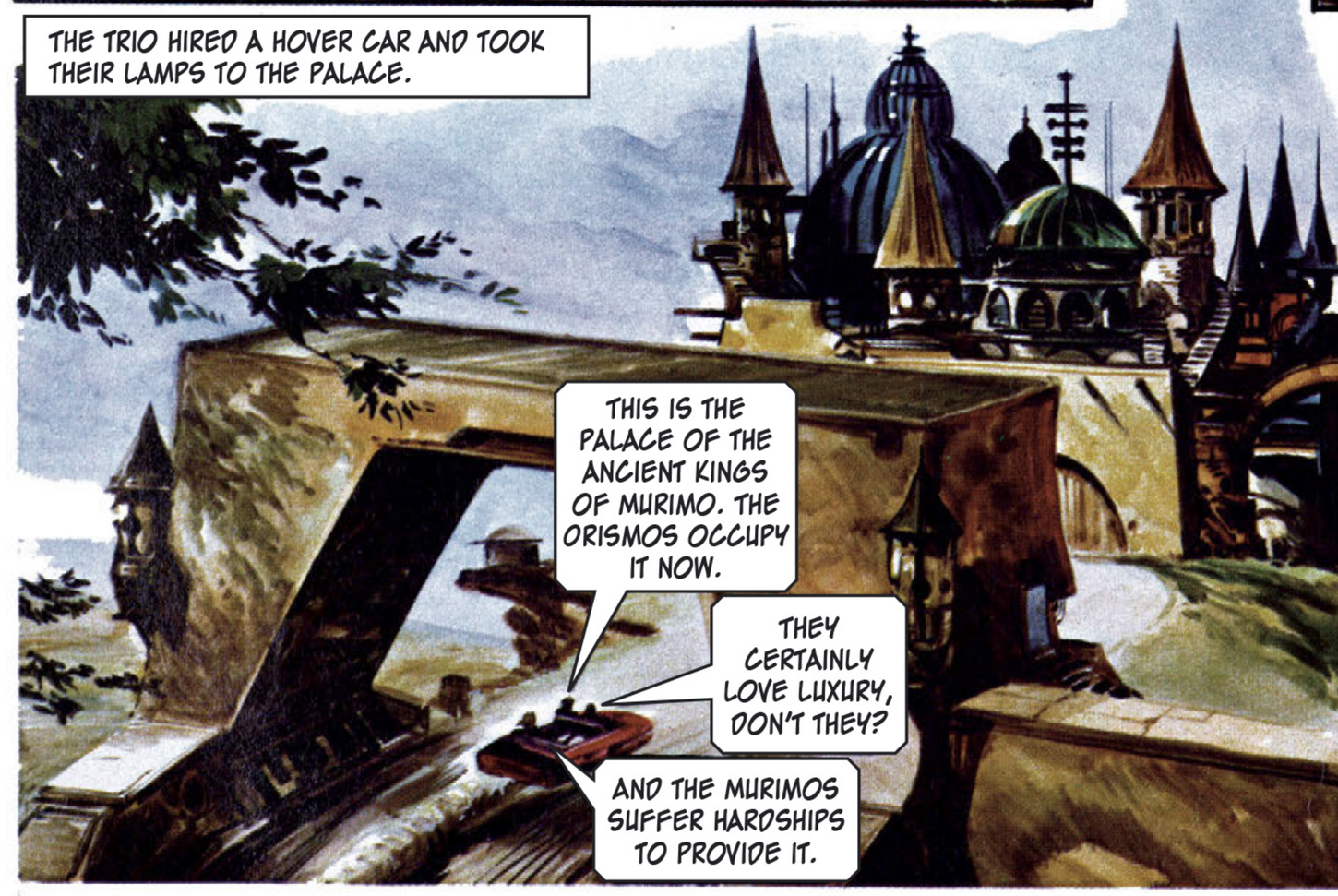
BY ALL THE PLANETS, THIS IS MARVELLOUS. YOU HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD A MASTER WEAPON. ALL YOU LACK IS THE PLANS.
WHO WILL GIVE THEM TO US?
ONLY ONE MAN CAN HELP US. PERIC, THE TRIGAN EMPIRE'S GREAT SCIENTIST. WHERE IS YOUR TRANSGALACTIC COMMUNICATOR?
SOON, URGENT MESSAGES WERE FLASHING ACROSS THE VASTNESS OF SPACE.
YOU WANT ME TO DESIGN A WEAPON WITH WHICH THE MURIMOS CAN DEFEAT THEIR INVADERS?
YES, PERIC. CAN YOU TRANSMIT THE PLANS BY TRANSGALACTIC COMMUNICATOR BEFORE TWO SUNSETS?
PERIC SUMMONED HIS ASSISTANTS AND TOGETHER THEY GOT TO WORK...
THIS IS A SCALE MODEL OF A MACHINE WE MADE FOR A WAR AGAINST THE CATONS. WITH A FEW MODIFICATIONS IT SHOULD SUIT THE MURIMOS ADMIRABLY.
SHALL WE TRANSMIT COMPUTER DRAWINGS OF IT TO THE MURIMOS?
NO! BEFORE THE MOONS RISE WE SHALL HAVE FINISHED OUR MODIFICATIONS TO THIS MODEL. WE SHALL THEN CONVEY IT IN ITS ENTIRETY TO THE MURIMOS IN THE PARTICLE PROCESSOR.
ELEKTON'S TWIN MOONS WERE STILL LOW IN THE SKY WHEN PERIC CALLED HIS ASSISTANTS AROUND HIM.
OUR WORK IS FINISHED.
THE PARTICLE PROCESSOR IS AT OPERATIONAL READINESS, SIR.
CAREFULLY THE TRIGAN SCIENTISTS PLACED THEIR MODEL IN THE MACHINE THAT WOULD TRANSMIT IT THROUGH SPACE.
EVEN AS PERIC WAS SPEAKING, THE MODEL BEGAN SLOWLY MATERIALISING BEFORE THE ASTONISHED EYES OF BRINKA AND THE MURIMOS...
THE MURIMOS HAVE SYNCHRONISED THEIR PARTICLE RECEIVER. START TRANSMITTING. I PREDICT THAT THIS DEVICE WILL BRING ABOUT A SWIFT END TO THE ENSLAVEMENT OF THE MURIMOS.
...AND WHEN THEY SAW WHAT PERIC HAD DEVISED, THE MURIMOS WERE ASTONISHED. HAD THEY AT LAST FOUND THE ANSWER TO THE ORISMO MENACE?

CAREFULLY, THE MURIMO SCIENTISTS LIFTED THE MODEL FROM THE PARTICLE PROCESSOR.
IF YOU CREATE A FULL-SCALE MODEL OF THAT, THE RESULT WILL BE HAPPINESS FOR YOUR PEOPLE.
AND UNHAPPINESS FOR THE ORISMOS. A PLEASING PROSPECT!

I MUST NOW MAKE PLANS TO HAVE THIS EXTRAORDINARY WEAPON CONSTRUCTED.
AND I SHALL GO BACK TO THE MARKET-PLACE. I MUST SEE THAT THE PEOPLE ARE WELL PREPARED FOR THE PHENOMENON THEY ARE ABOUT TO ENCOUNTER.

RETURNING TO THE SURFACE BY SUBMARINE, BRINKA HURRIED TO HIS FRIENDS.
TREASURES FROM TRIGAN! UNBEATABLE BARGAINS.
WE HAD A BIG ORDER WHILE YOU WERE AWAY, BRINKA.
EXCELLENT. TELL ME ABOUT IT.

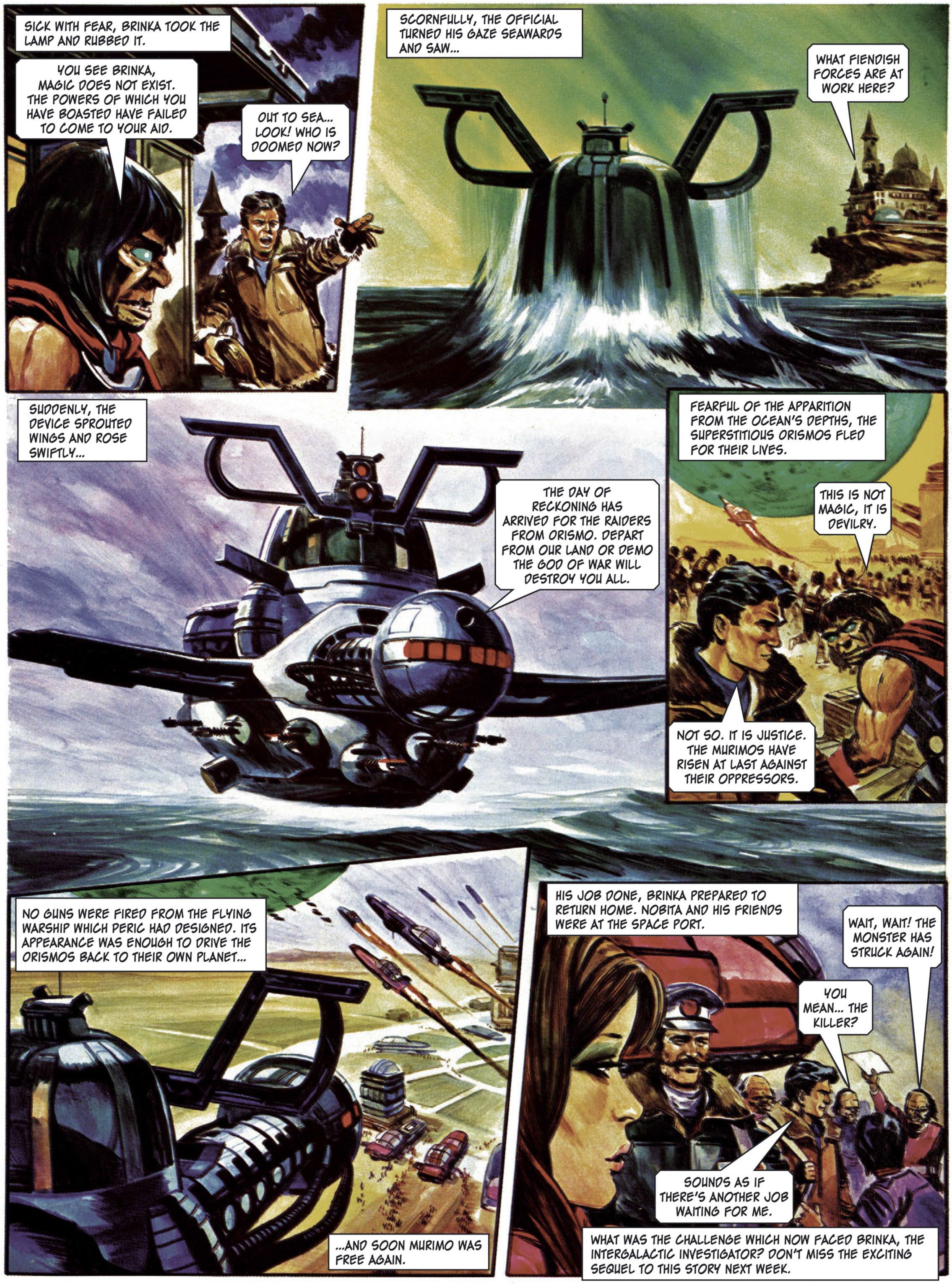

I WAS TELLING THE CUSTOMERS A TALE ABOUT THESE BEING MAGIC LAMPS. I SAID THAT WHEN YOU RUB THEM, YOUR WISHES COME TRUE. JUST A JOKE, OF COURSE.
THEN THIS BIG ORISMO ORDERED TEN TO BE DELIVERED TO THE PALACE. WE'RE TAKING THEM TONIGHT.
I'LL COME ALONG. A BIT OF MAGIC MIGHT COME IN HANDY.


THE TRIO HIRED A HOVER CAR AND TOOK THEIR LAMPS TO THE PALACE.
THIS IS THE PALACE OF THE ANCIENT KINGS OF MURIMO. THE ORISMOS OCCUPY IT NOW.
THEY CERTAINLY LOVE LUXURY, DON'T THEY?
AND THE MURIMOS SUFFER HARDSHIPS TO PROVIDE IT.

A HUGE ORISMO SERVANT ADMITTED THEM TO A SCENE OF SPLENDOUR.
YOU HAVE BROUGHT THE TRINKETS, I SEE. WHAT DO YOU CALL THEM?
THEY ARE VORG LAMPS. SOME SAY THERE IS A LEGEND OF MAGIC ATTACHED TO THEM.

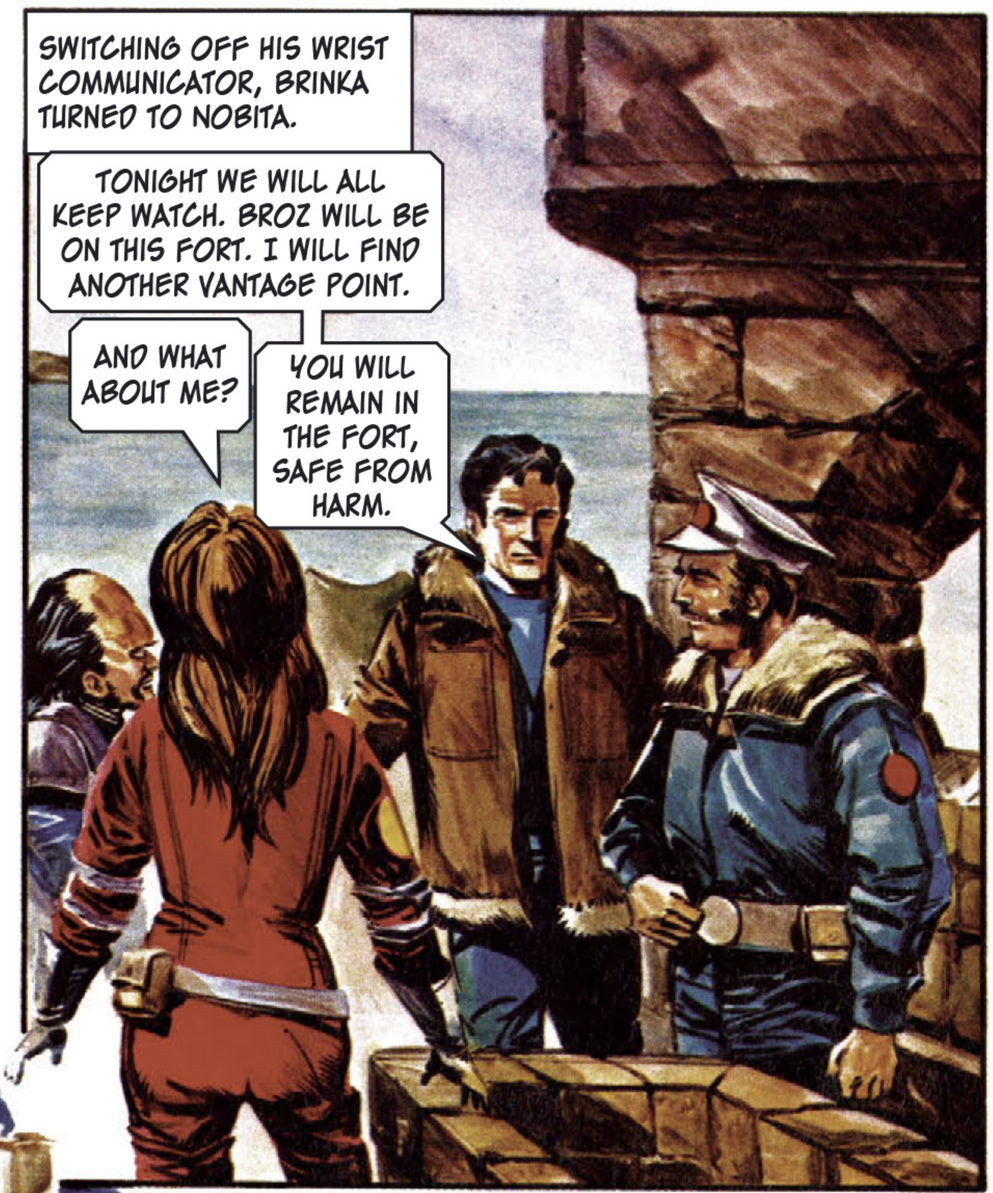
AT THE MENTION OF MAGIC, THE OFFICIAL LAUGHED.
SUCH LEGENDS ARE FOR CHILDREN.
PEOPLE HAVE SCOFFED AT SUCH THINGS BEFORE AND BEEN FORCED TO CHANGE THEIR TUNE.
YOU MAY HAVE NEED OF THIS MAGIC YOURSELF ONE DAY, MY FRIEND. AND THEN WE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT SUCH THINGS.
HAVING DELIVERED THEIR LAMPS, THE TRIO TURNED TO GO.
HOW SHALL WE ARRANGE PAYMENT FOR THE LAMPS?
THE MONEY AWAITS YOU IN THE TREASURER'S OFFICE. I WILL TAKE YOU THERE.
GOODBYE MY FRIENDS. I WISH YOU A SAFE JOURNEY HOME.
BRINKA WAS ABOUT TO FOLLOW THE OTHERS WHEN...
IT IS NOT GOODBYE TO YOU, FRIEND BRINKA. UNLESS YOU REFUSE TO TALK TO THE NEWLY APPOINTED HIGH ONE. IN WHICH CASE YOU WILL NEVER SAY GOODBYE AGAIN. BUT FIRST, BRINKA, LET US MAKE SURE THAT YOU COME QUIETLY.
STARS FLASHED IN BRINKA'S BRAIN AS A MIGHTY FIST SLAMMED AGAINST HIS JAW.
GNUNGG!!
SLEEP TIGHT, BRINKA. WHEN YOU WAKE UP WE SHALL HAVE THE MOST UN-PLEASANT SURPRISE WAITING FOR YOU.

WHEN BRINKA REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS...
OUR INVESTIGATORS HAVE DISCOVERED THAT YOU ARE A SPY WORKING FOR THE MURIMOS - AND SPIES MUST DIE. BUT FIRST I INTEND TO EXPOSE YOU TO THE NATION'S RIDICULE.
A MURIMO SPY, MASQUERADING AS A SERVANT HEART THESE WORDS. HE HURRIED TO THE UNDERSEA CAVERN WHERE THE MURIMOS WERE WORKING ON THEIR SECRET WEAPON. NOBITA WAS WAITING FOR HIM.
AT DAWN, YOU WILL BE TAKEN TO THE SEAPORT WITH THIS LAMP. WHEN THE SUN RISES YOU WILL CALL UPON THE LAMP'S POWERS TO SAVE YOU FROM DEATH. IF THEY FAIL...!
I HAVE COME FROM THE PALACE. THE TIME FOR ACTION HAS ARRIVED.
TELL ME THE DETAILS, MY FRIEND!
SWIFTLY, THE MURIMO SPY TOLD NOBITA OF THE FATE AWAITING BRINKA.
THE WEAPON HAS BEEN COMPLETED. AT DAWN TOMORROW IT WILL BRING FREEDOM TO OUR PEOPLE.
THE DAWN SKIES WERE STILL GREY WHEN BRINKA WAS LED ON TO THE BALCONY OF A SEASIDE PALACE.
TAKE THIS LAMP, BRINKA. WHEN THE SUN RISES, WORK YOUR MAGIC WITH IT. IF IT FAILS, YOU WILL NOT HAVE A SECOND CHANCE.


SICK WITH FEAR, BRINKA TOOK THE LAMP AND RUBBED IT.
YOU SEE BRINKA, MAGIC DOES NOT EXIST. THE POWERS OF WHICH YOU HAVE BOASTED HAVE FAILED TO COME TO YOUR AID.
OUT TO SEA... LOOK! WHO IS DOOMED NOW?
SCORNFULLY, THE OFFICIAL TURNED HIS GAZE SEAWARDS AND SAW...
WHAT FIENDISH FORCES ARE AT WORK HERE?
SUDDENLY, THE DEVICE SPROUTED WINGS AND ROSE SWIFTLY...
THE DAY OF RECKONING HAS ARRIVED FOR THE RAIDERS FROM ORISMO. DEPART FROM OUR LAND OR DEMO THE GOD OF WAR WILL DESTROY YOU ALL.
FEARFUL OF THE APPARITION FROM THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS, THE SUPERSTITIOUS ORISMOS FLED FOR THEIR LIVES.
THIS IS NOT MAGIC, IT IS DEVILRY.
NOT SO. IT IS JUSTICE. THE MURIMOS HAVE RISEN AT LAST AGAINST THEIR OPPRESSORS.
NO GUNS WERE FIRED FROM THE FLYING WARSHIP WHICH PERIC HAD DESIGNED. ITS APPEARANCE WAS ENOUGH TO DRIVE THE ORISMOS BACK TO THEIR OWN PLANET...
...AND SOON MURIMO WAS FREE AGAIN.
HIS JOB DONE, BRINKA PREPARED TO RETURN HOME. NOBITA AND HIS FRIENDS WERE AT THE SPACE PORT.
WAIT, WAIT! THE MONSTER HAS STRUCK AGAIN!
YOU MEAN... THE KILLER?
SOUNDS AS IF THERE'S ANOTHER JOB WAITING FOR ME.
WHAT WAS THE CHALLENGE WHICH NOW FACED BRINKA, THE INTERGALACTIC INVESTIGATOR? DON'T MISS THE EXCITING SEQUEL TO THIS STORY NEXT WEEK.

HALF THE PEOPLE IN THE VILLAGE BELOW HAVE DISAPPEARED. WHERE THEY HAVE GONE IS A MYSTERY.
WE ONLY KNOW THAT NOT A TRACE OF THE VICTIMS REMAINS. THEY VANISH ABSOLUTELY.
THEY LANDED ON A HELICOPTER PAD IN THE VILLAGE'S CENTRE SQUARE.
OH MY SON, MY POOR SON. THE CREATURE TOOK HIM LAST NIGHT.
EVERY NIGHT, A STRANGE CREATURE STRIKES WITHOUT FAIL. AND NOBODY KNOWS WHO IT WILL NEXT CLAIM AS ITS VICTIM.
DOES NOBODY KEEP WATCH FOR IT?
IN THE BEGINNING THE VILLAGERS TOOK TURNS TO KEEP WATCH, A DIFFERENT MAN EACH NIGHT.
WHY A DIFFERENT MAN EACH NIGHT?
BECAUSE NONE REMAINED TO SERVE A SECOND WATCH.
THAT REMARK STUNG BRINKA INTO ACTION. HE CALLED TRIGO ON HIS WRIST COMMUNICATOR.
HAVE I YOUR PERMISSION TO REMAIN ON MURIMO, EMPEROR? THERE IS A MYSTERY CREATURE ON THE LOOSE!
YES! CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE CREATURE?

THE CREATURE HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN. WE DO NOT KNOW IF IT IS A LIVING BEING OR SOMETHING OF UNIMAGINABLE FORM.
THEN YOU MUST CERTAINLY REMAIN. BUT TAKE CARE THAT YOU DO NOT BECOME ITS NEXT VICTIM.


SWITCHING OFF HIS WRIST COMMUNICATOR, BRINKA TURNED TO NOBITA.
TONIGHT WE WILL ALL KEEP WATCH. BROZ WILL BE ON THIS FORT. I WILL FIND ANOTHER VANTAGE POINT.
AND WHAT ABOUT ME?
YOU WILL REMAIN IN THE FORT, SAFE FROM HARM.

BUT CORIN HAD OTHER IDEAS. THAT NIGHT, WHILE THE MEN KEPT WATCH...
I SEE FOOT-STEPS ON THE SHORE WHAT A LUCKY BREAK. THEY CAN ONLY HAVE BEEN MADE BY...

...THE MARAUDER. WHAT KIND OF CREATURE COULD IT BE?

THRILLED THAT SHE SHOULD BE THE ONE TO PICK UP THE CREATURE'S TRAIL, CORIN BEGAN FOLLOWING IT, FORGETFUL OF THE DANGER. SUDDENLY, A SHADOW MOVED AMONG THE ROCKS.
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO BE THE FIRST TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY.

CORIN HAD NO IDEA OF HOW SOON HER WISH WAS TO BE GRANTED FOR, WITH A BLOOD-CURDLING ROAR...
...IT POUNCED.

AT THE SIGHT OF THE MONSTER'S FANGS, CORIN FLED FOR HER LIFE.
HELP! HELP! SAVE ME!

THEN SHE TRIPPED...
AAAAH!

THE SOFT PART OF THE CREATURE'S MOUTH CLOSED ON CORIN'S HAND.
I'M NOT TO DIE YET! BUT WHY? AND WHERE IS HE TAKING ME?

MEANWHILE BRINKA, KEEPING WATCH, HAD SEEN NOTHING OF THE MONSTER.
THE MONSTER HAS STRUCK, MASTERS. HE HAS CLAIMED HIS VICTIM FOR THE NIGHT.
WHO WAS IT? MAKE HASTE, MAN!

IT WAS THE YOUNG LADY WHO CAME WITH YOU. THE DAUGHTER OF THE MAN KNOWN AS BROZ. THE MONSTER WAS SEEN DRAGGING HER OFF.

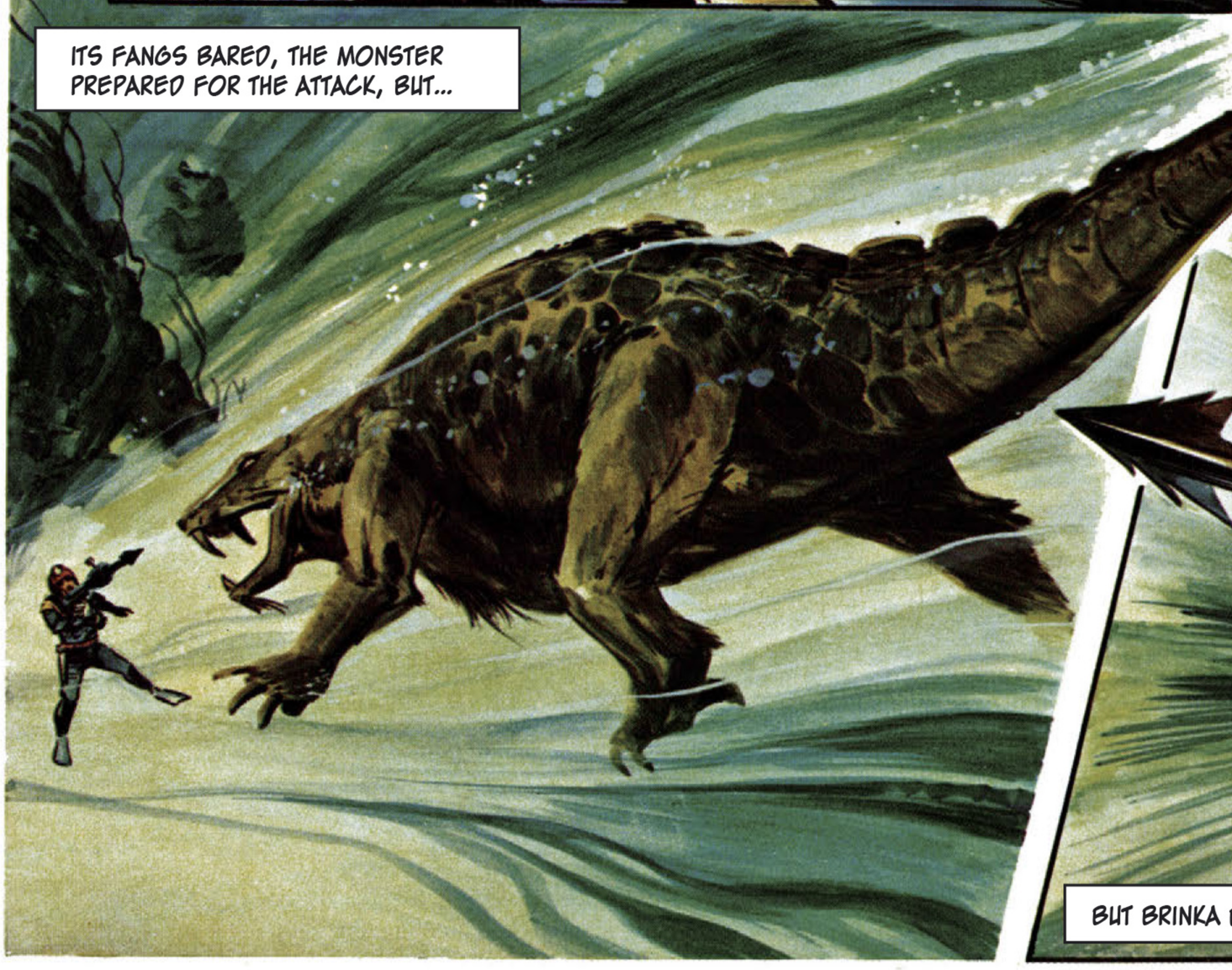
AT THIS MOMENT, THE MONSTER WAS DRAGGING CORIN THROUGH SHALLOW WATER TO AN ISLET SURROUNDED BY ROCKS ON WHICH IT HAD ITS LAIR.
WHY IS IT DRAGGING ME HERE?

CORIN FOUND HERSELF IN A ROCKY LAIR.
WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME NOW?

THE CREATURE'S GOING AWAY! THIS IS VERY STRANGE!

THE MONSTER! I'VE SEEN IT! HURRY UP WITH THAT GEAR, BROZ.

IN SECONDS, BRINKA WAS IN THE SEA IN PURSUIT OF THE STRANGE BEAST.
JUST GET A LITTLE CLOSER. THEN I'VE GOT HIM.

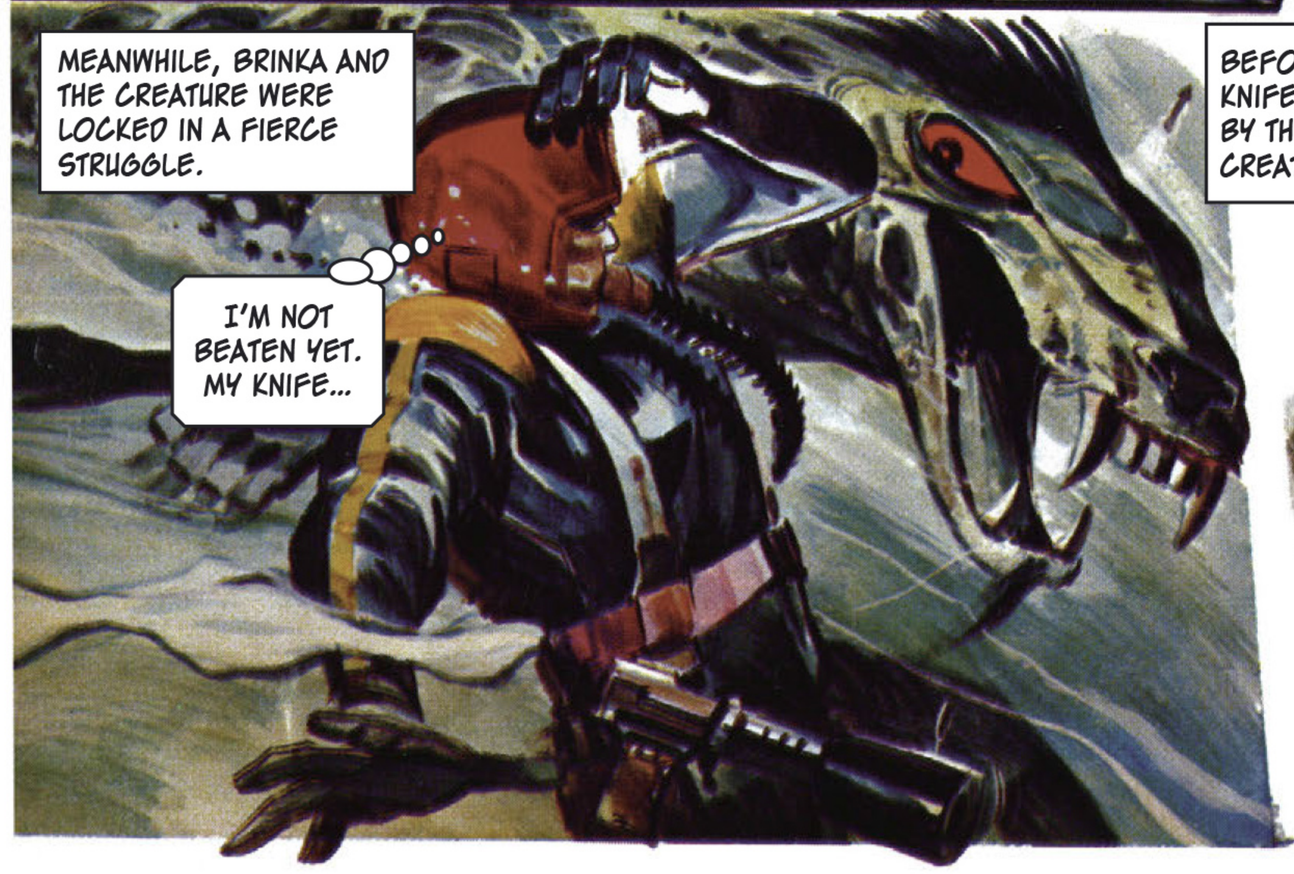

ITS FANGS BARED, THE MONSTER PREPARED FOR THE ATTACK, BUT...

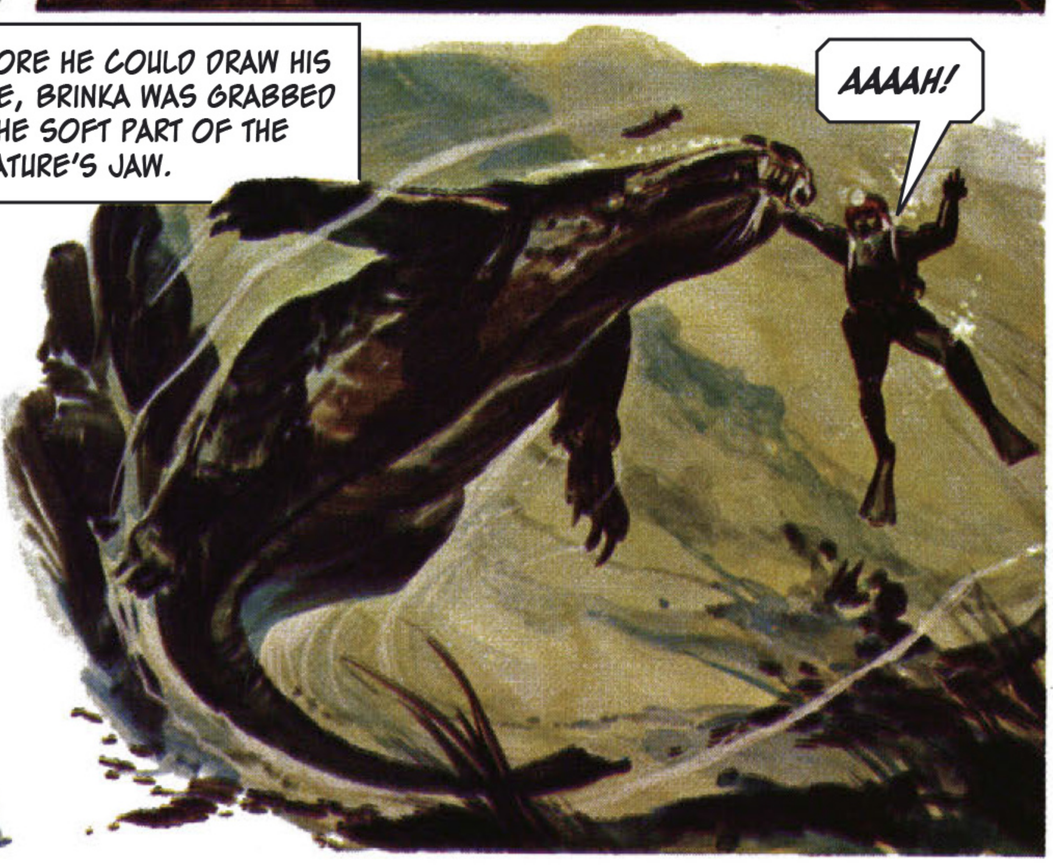
IT WAS BRINKA WHO STRUCK THE FIRST BLOW.
IF I MISS, I WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE – NOT WITH A BEAST LIKE THIS.
BUT BRINKA DID MISS!

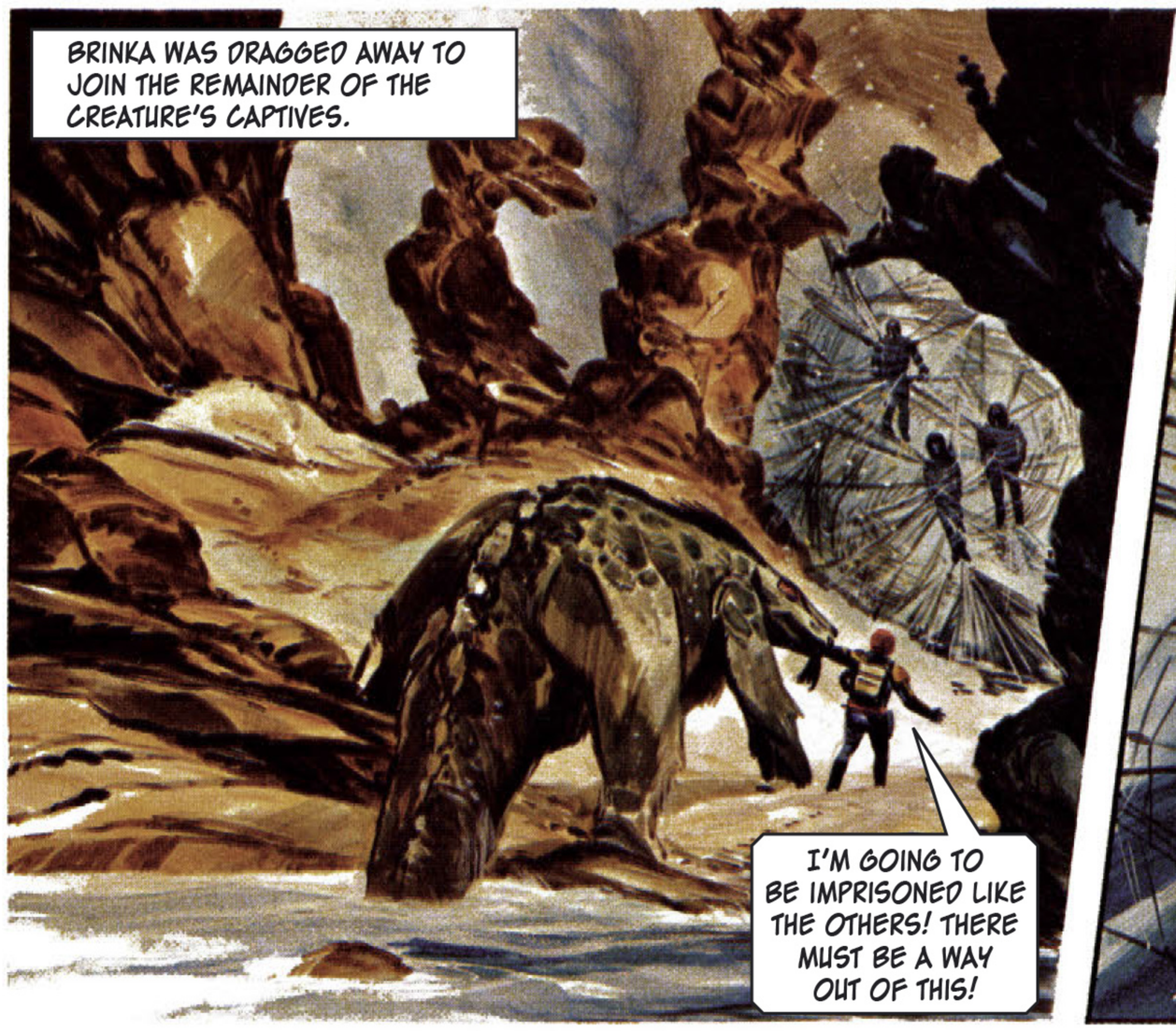
UNAWARE OF BRINKA'S DESPERATE STRUGGLE, CORIN WAS BEGINNING TO EXPLORE THE CREATURE'S LAIR.
THE MISSING PEOPLE FROM THE VILLAGE! THEY'RE ALIVE. BUT WHY HAS THE CREATURE IMPRISONED THEM LIKE THIS?

PUZZLED, CORIN MOVED CLOSER TO THE CAPTIVES.
THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE UNHURT. I'LL FIND A WAY TO FREE YOU.

IT KEEPS US HERE AND FEEDS US. WHY, WE DO NOT KNOW.
THERE MUST BE A REASON. I WONDER WHAT IT CAN BE?

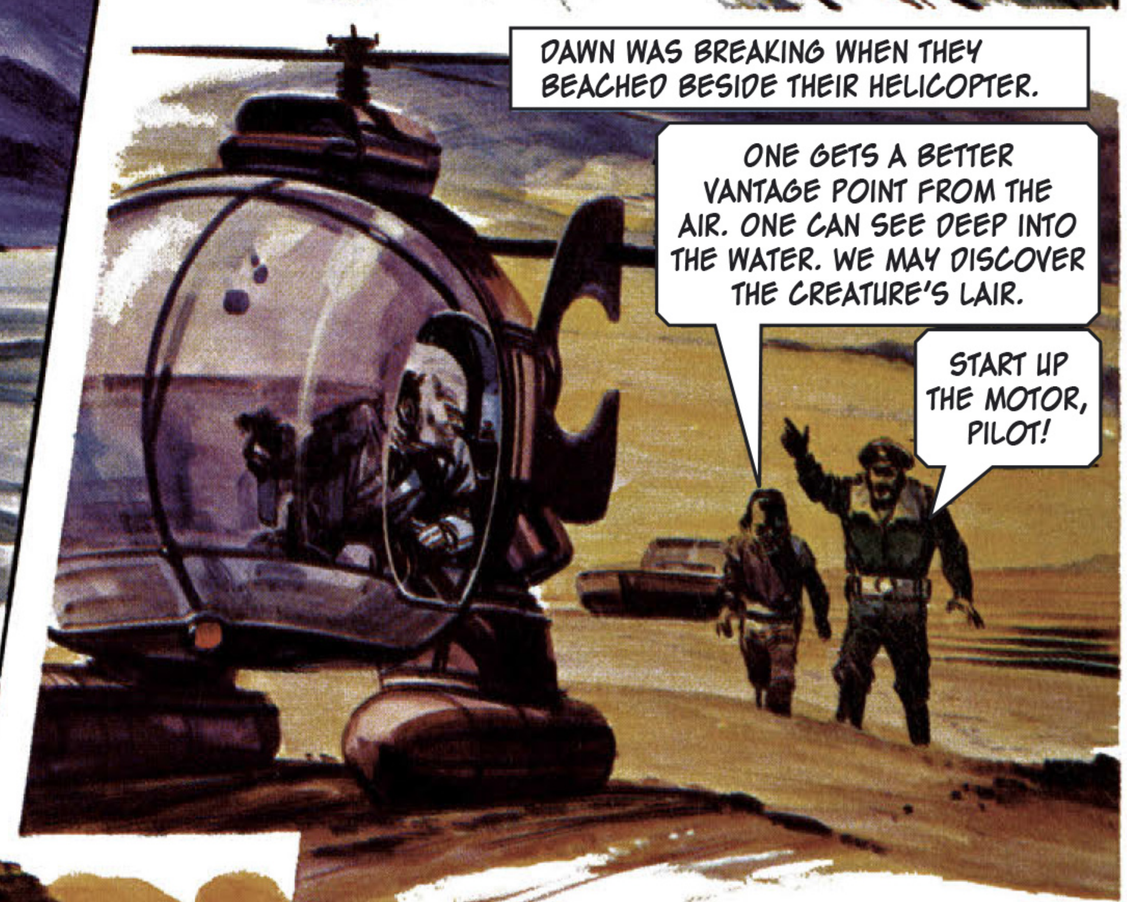

MEANWHILE, BRINKA AND THE CREATURE WERE LOCKED IN A FIERCE STRUGGLE.
I'M NOT BEATEN YET. MY KNIFE...


BEFORE HE COULD DRAW HIS KNIFE, BRINKA WAS GRABBED BY THE SOFT PART OF THE CREATURE'S JAW.
AAAAH!


BRINKA WAS DRAGGED AWAY TO JOIN THE REMAINDER OF THE CREATURE'S CAPTIVES.
I'M GOING TO BE IMPRISONED LIKE THE OTHERS! THERE MUST BE A WAY OUT OF THIS!

BUT BRINKA WAS POWERLESS AGAINST THE HUGE CREATURE WHICH BEGAN TO ENTWINE HIM IN ITS WEB.

WHILE THIS WAS GOING ON, BROZ HAD BECOME WORRIED BY BRINKA'S PROLONGED ABSENCE.
BRINKA IS STILL DOWN THERE WITH THAT CREATURE. I MUST GO AFTER HIM BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
IF YOU DO, YOU MAY SHARE HIS FATE. BETTER COME ASHORE. I HAVE AN IDEA THAT MAY SERVE US WELL.

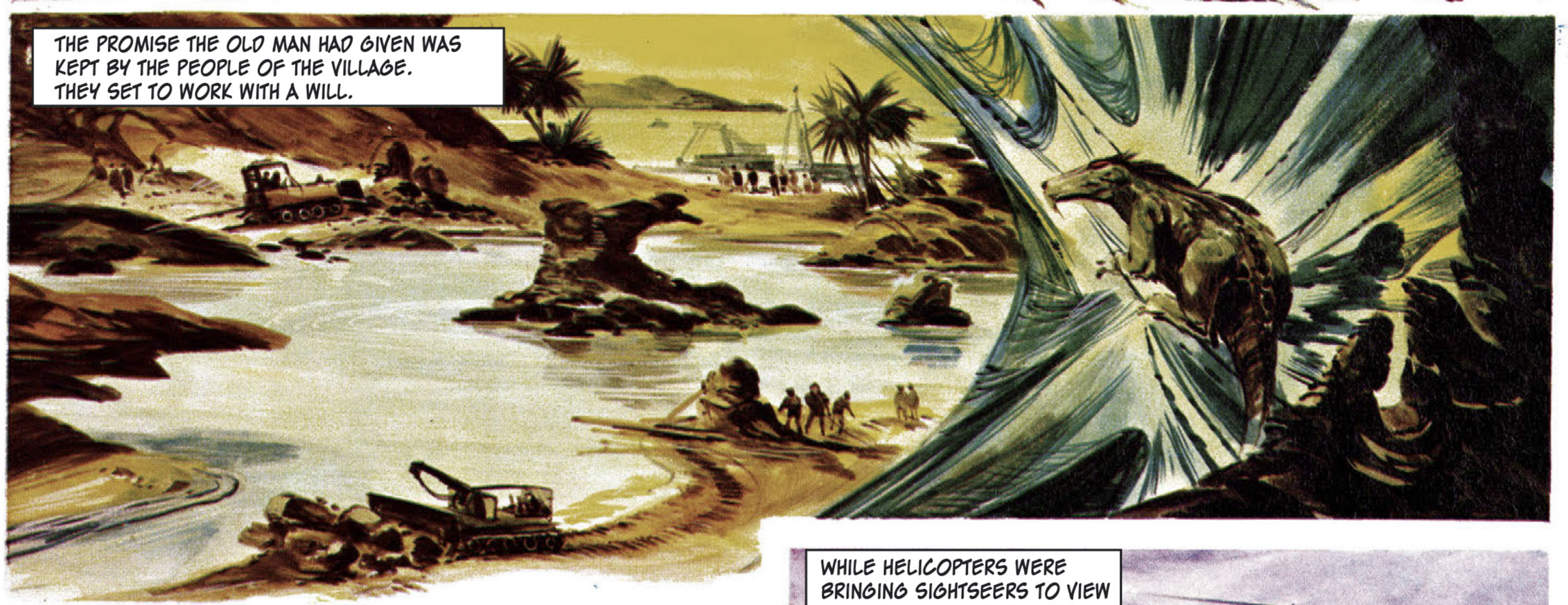

DAWN WAS BREAKING WHEN THEY BEACHED BESIDE THEIR HELICOPTER.
ONE GETS A BETTER VANTAGE POINT FROM THE AIR. ONE CAN SEE DEEP INTO THE WATER. WE MAY DISCOVER THE CREATURE'S LAIR.
START UP THE MOTOR, PILOT!

THAT'S NOBITA'S HELICOPTER. THEY'RE SEARCHING FOR US!
HURRY! OH DO HURRY! IF THEY DON'T FIND US, WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US ALL?

FROM THE HELICOPTER, BROZ AND NOBITA PEERED AT THE STRANGE SCENE BELOW THEM.
THIS IS STRANGE. ALL THE CAPTIVES ARE ALIVE. THE CREATURE HASN'T HURT THEM AT ALL.
DON'T SHOOT! TRY TO DRAW THE CREATURE AWAY.
THE BEAST IS TO BE PITIED. IT IS NOT A KILLER.
AS THE HELICOPTER EDGED AWAY, THE BEAST LUNGED AFTER IT. THIS WAS CORIN'S CLUE FOR ACTION.
TAKE MY KNIFE. THAT'S A GOOD GIRL. CUT US FREE, QUICKLY!
A KEEN EDGE WILL SOON CUT THROUGH THE WEB.
I THINK I KNOW WHY THE BEAST CAPTURED US. SPARE IT!
THE CREATURE IS A LONE SURVIVOR OF A RACE OF LEGENDARY BEINGS. THESE CREATURES DEEMED IT THEIR DUTY TO PLACE MANKIND IN PROTECTIVE CUSTODY. TO SAVE MEN FROM KILLING EACH OTHER IN SUCH A WAR AS WE HAVE RECENTLY EXPERIENCE WITH THE ORISMOS.
IT'S ONLY A TRANQUILIZER DART. SHOULD KNOCK THE CREATURE OUT LONG ENOUGH FOR US TO GET SOME ROPES AROUND IT.
WHEN THE CREATURE FINDS THAT WE ARE FREE, IT COULD FORGET ITS PEACEFUL INTENTIONS.
I THINK IT'S ALREADY FORGOTTEN THEM. LOOK!

CORIN, ARE YOU HURT?
NO FATHER. I'M QUITE ALL RIGHT.
LET'S TIE THE CREATURE UP WITH ITS OWN WEB BEFORE IT RECOVERS FROM THE TRANQUILLISER.

WILLING HANDS SOON HAD THE CREATURE IMPRISONED IN THE TOUGH SILK OF ITS OWN MAKING.
WE'LL MAKE YOU A NEW HOME, OLD FELLOW, ONE FROM WHICH YOU CAN'T ESCAPE TO HARASS OUR VILLAGERS. AND WE'LL SEE TO IT THAT YOU AND WE LIVE IN PERFECT HARMONY.


THE PROMISE THE OLD MAN HAD GIVEN WAS KEPT BY THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE. THEY SET TO WORK WITH A WILL.

FINALLY, THE WORK WAS FINISHED AND THE CREATURE WAS INVITED TO ENJOY ITS NEW HOME.
A HAPPY SOLUTION TO THE MYSTERY OF THE DISAPPEARING VILLAGERS, I WOULD SAY.
AND THE VILLAGE HAS GAINED A FIRST-CLASS TOURIST ATTRACTION.

WHILE HELICOPTERS WERE BRINGING SIGHTSEERS TO VIEW THE CREATURE, BRINKA HAS A HAPPY MESSAGE TO GIVE TO TRIGO, EMPEROR OF THE TRIGANS.
GREETINGS, EMPEROR. MY MISSION HERE IS ACCOMPLISHED... CONCLUDED, I THINK I MAY SAY, TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL CONCERNED, BOTH HUMAN AND OTHERWISE.
I SHALL BE EAGER FOR YOUR REPORT WHEN YOU RETURN TO ELEKTON. CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES FOR A JOB WELL DONE.

LXXII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

JUNIX'S CLAIM TO THE THRONE

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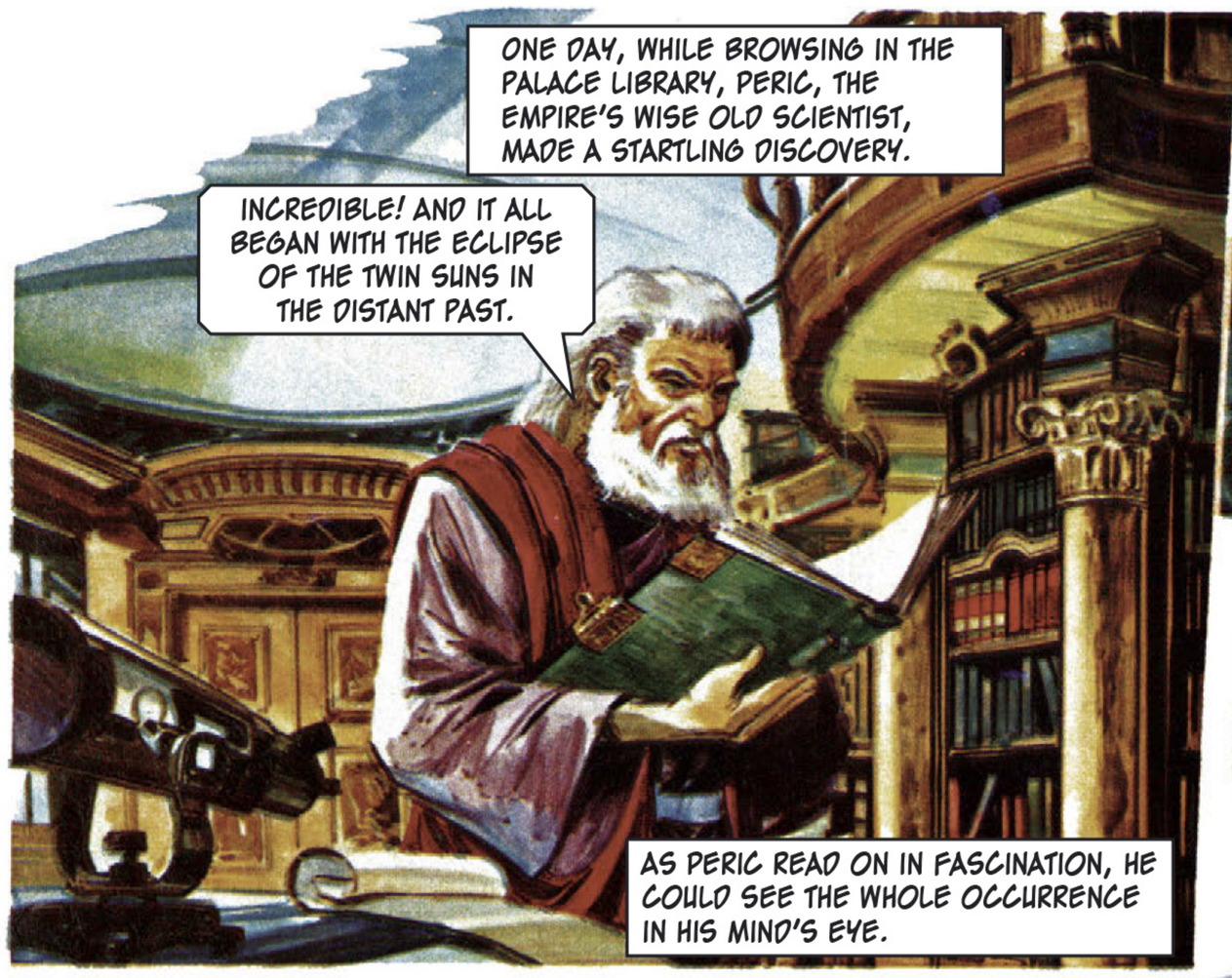
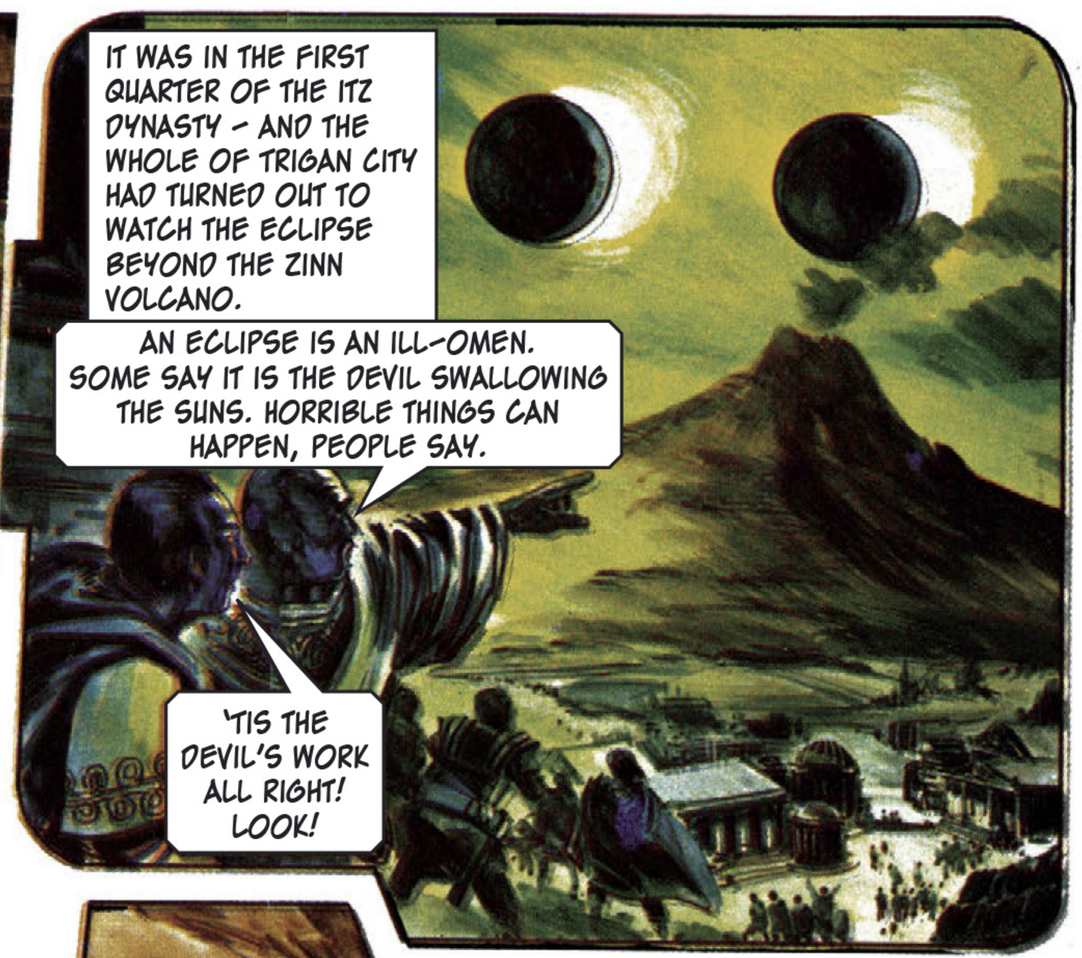
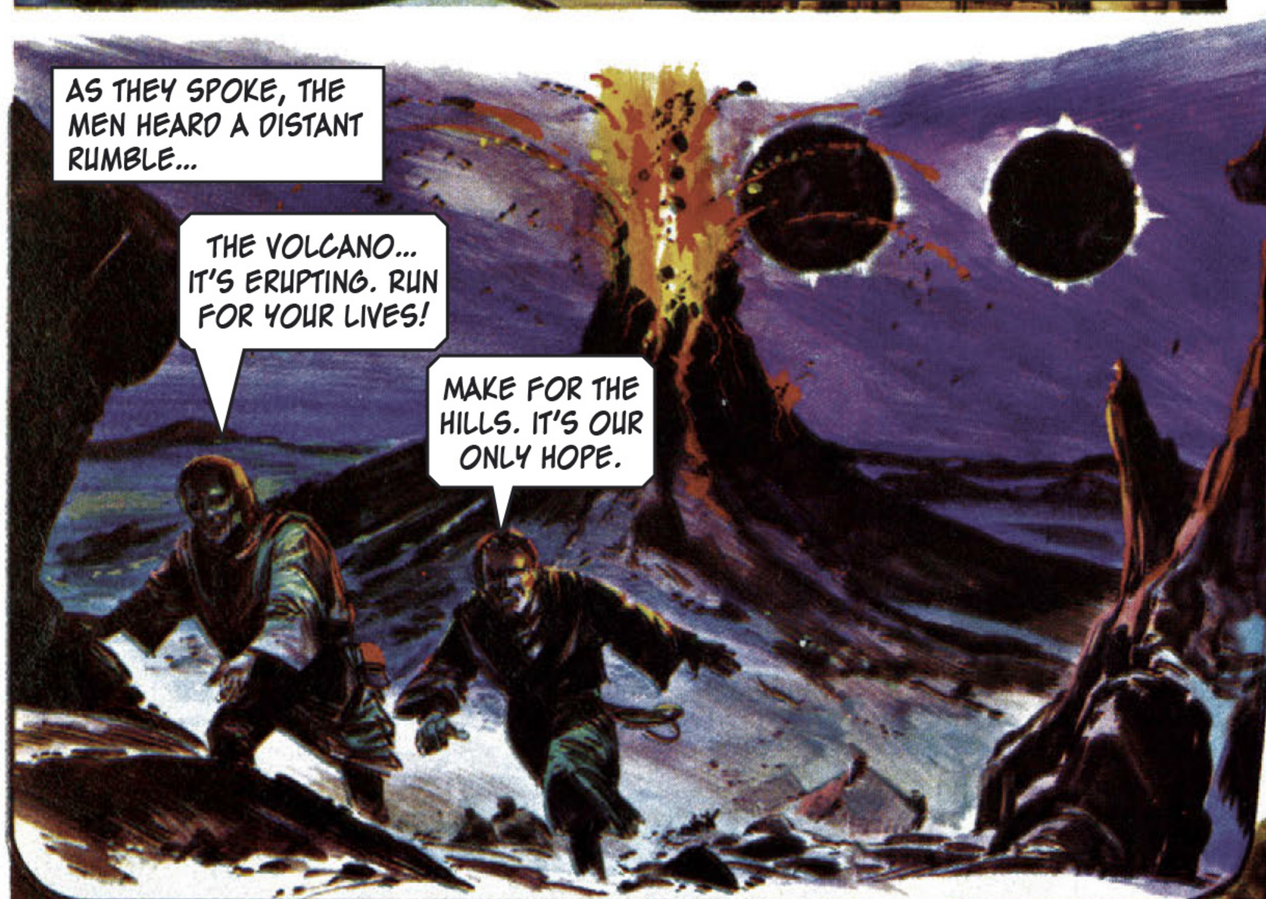
Story by Ken Roscoe

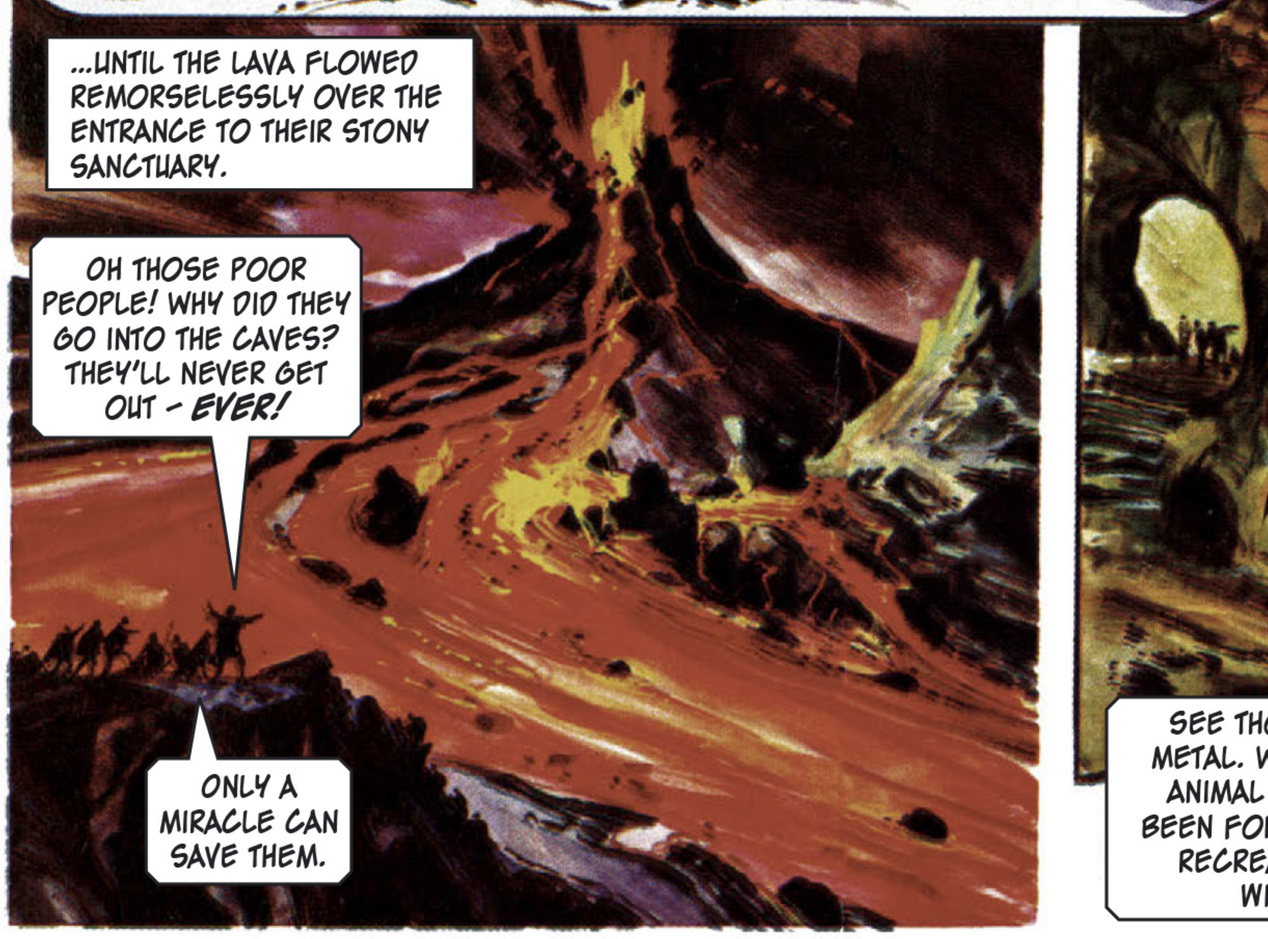
Art by Gerry Wood


ONE DAY, WHILE BROWSING IN THE PALACE LIBRARY, PERIC, THE EMPIRE'S WISE OLD SCIENTIST, MADE A STARTLING DISCOVERY.
INCREDIBLE! AND IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE ECLIPSE OF THE TWIN SUNS IN THE DISTANT PAST.
AS PERIC READ ON IN FASCINATION, HE COULD SEE THE WHOLE OCCURRENCE IN HIS MIND'S EYE.

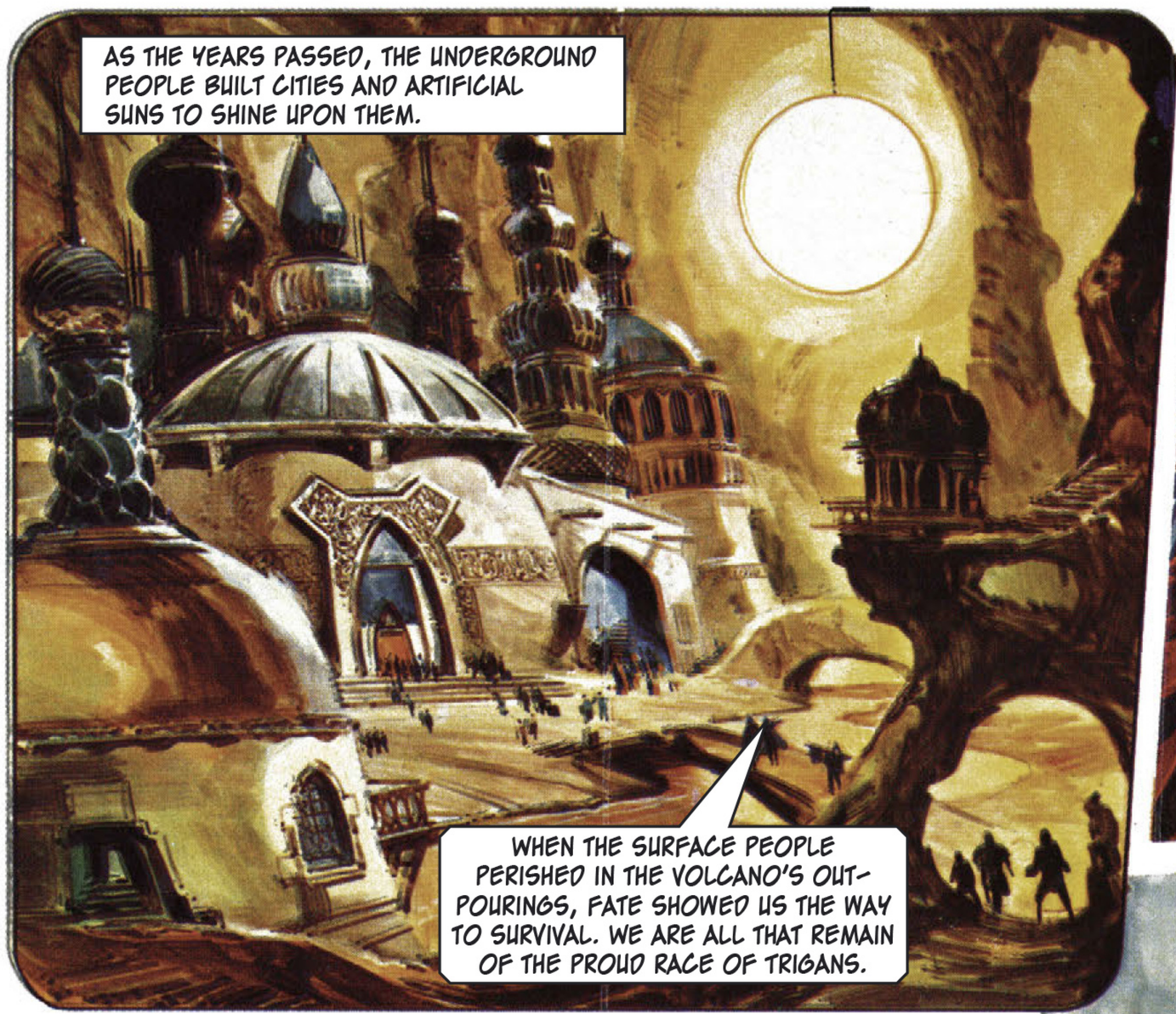

IT WAS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE ITZ DYNASTY – AND THE WHOLE OF TRIGAN CITY HAD TURNED OUT TO WATCH THE ECLIPSE BEYOND THE ZINN VOLCANO.
AN ECLIPSE IS AN ILL-OMEN. SOME SAY IT IS THE DEVIL SWALLOWING THE SUNS. HORRIBLE THINGS CAN HAPPEN, PEOPLE SAY.
'TIS THE DEVIL'S WORK ALL RIGHT! LOOK!


AS THEY SPOKE, THE MEN HEARD A DISTANT RUMBLE...
THE VOLCANO... IT'S ERUPTING. RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
MAKE FOR THE HILLS. IT'S OUR ONLY HOPE.

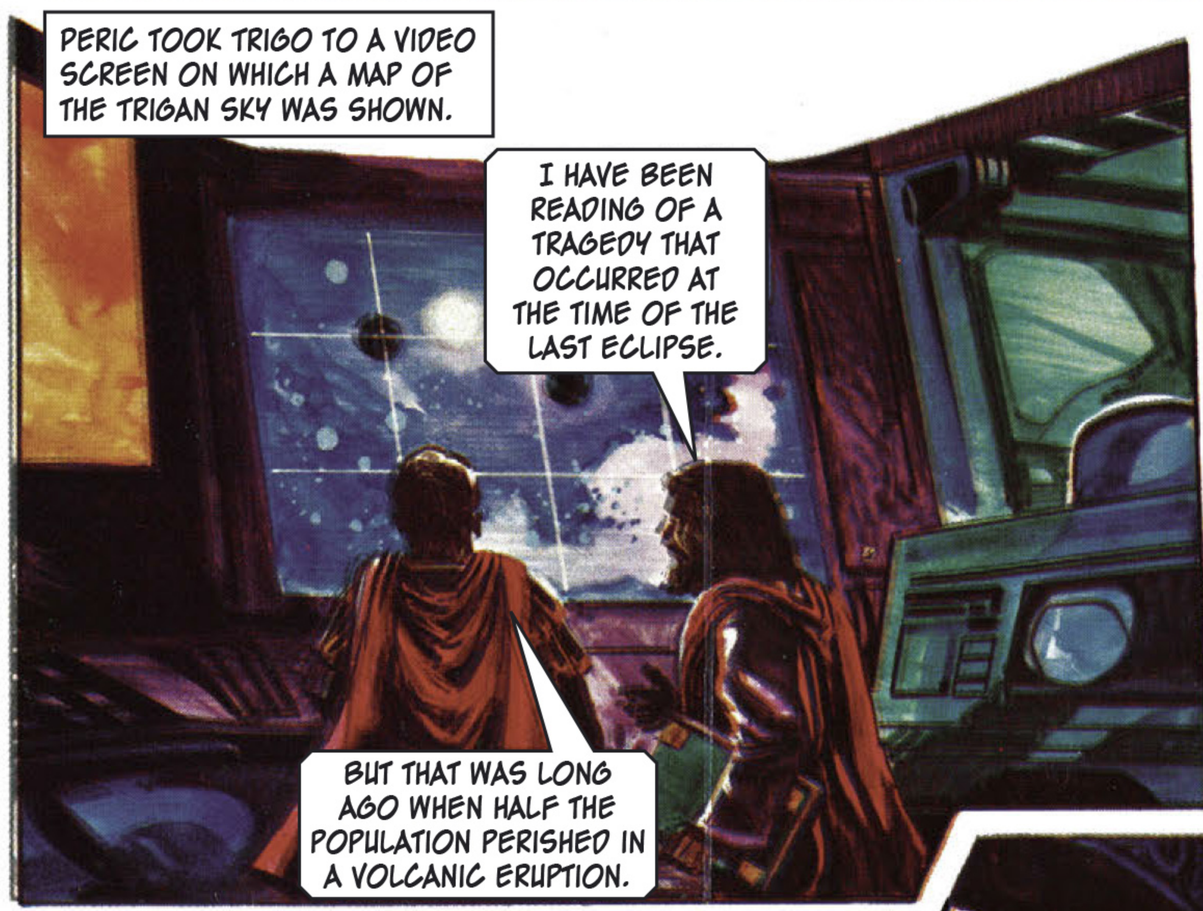
WHILE SOME PEOPLE RACED FOR THE HILLS, OTHERS SOUGHT REFUGE IN CAVERNS DEEP WITHIN THE MOUNTAIN...


...UNTIL THE LAVA FLOWED REMORSELESSLY OVER THE ENTRANCE TO THEIR STONY SANCTUARY.
OH THOSE POOR PEOPLE! WHY DID THEY GO INTO THE CAVES? THEY'LL NEVER GET OUT – EVER!
ONLY A MIRACLE CAN SAVE THEM.

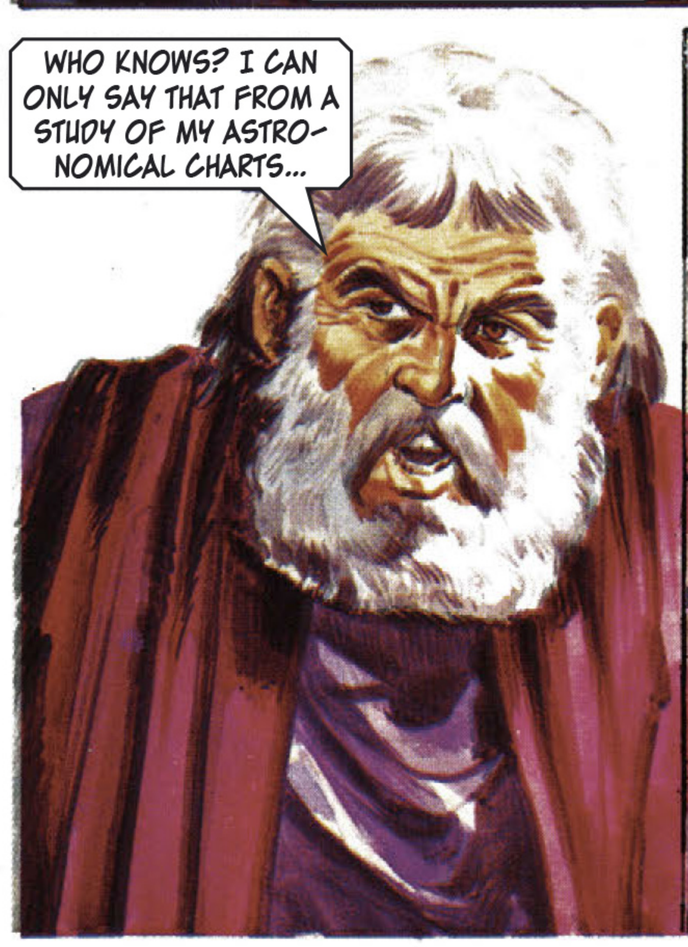
BUT UNKNOWN TO THE PEOPLE ON THE SURFACE, THOSE WHO FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE CAVERNS DID SURVIVE. A MAN AROSE TO LEAD THEM AND, UNDER HIS GUIDANCE, THEY BEGAN CREATING THEIR OWN WORLD.
SEE THOSE STREAKS. THAT IS METAL. WE SHALL BUILD WITH IT. ANIMAL AND PLANT FOOD HAS BEEN FOUND AS WELL. WE SHALL RECREATE OUR CIVILISATION WITHIN THE ROCKS.


AS THE YEARS PASSED, THE UNDERGROUND PEOPLE BUILT CITIES AND ARTIFICIAL SUNS TO SHINE UPON THEM.
WHEN THE SURFACE PEOPLE PERISHED IN THE VOLCANO'S OUT-POURINGS, FATE SHOWED US THE WAY TO SURVIVAL. WE ARE ALL THAT REMAIN OF THE PROUD RACE OF TRIGANS.

BUT THE LEADER WAS WRONG. THE TRIGANS ON THE SURFACE HAD SURVIVED AND FLOURISHED.
WHY THE FROWN, MY OLD FRIEND? IS THE PLANET DOOMED?
DON'T JOKE, TRIGO. I HAVE SERIOUS NEWS FOR YOU.


PERIC TOOK TRIGO TO A VIDEO SCREEN ON WHICH A MAP OF THE TRIGAN SKY WAS SHOWN.
I HAVE BEEN READING OF A TRAGEDY THAT OCCURRED AT THE TIME OF THE LAST ECLIPSE.
BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO WHEN HALF THE POPULATION PERISHED IN A VOLCANIC ERUPTION.

SO IT WAS BELIEVED. THAT BRINGS ME TO MY GRAVE NEWS.
THE END OF OUR PLANET, NO DOUBT!

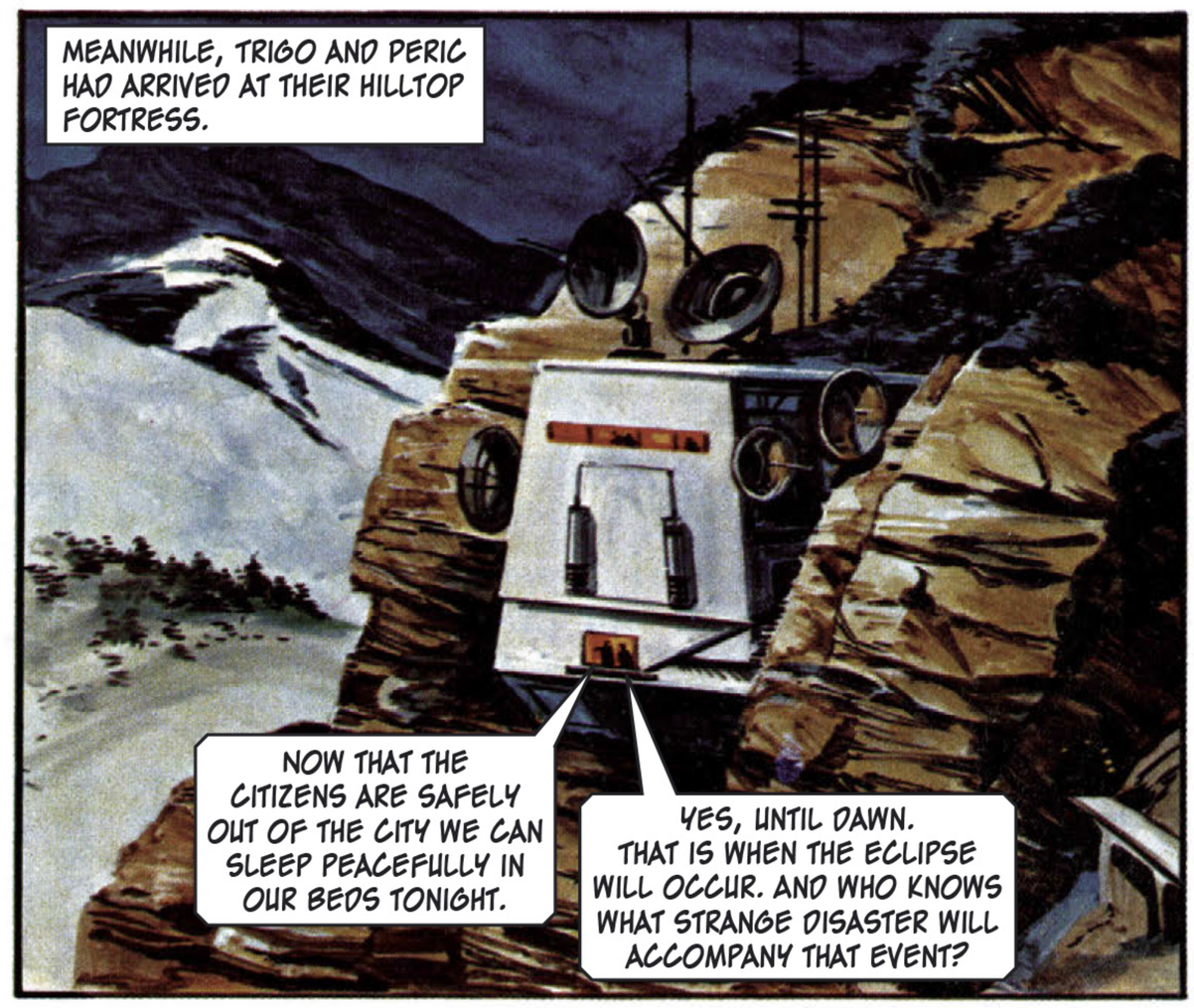

WHO KNOWS? I CAN ONLY SAY THAT FROM A STUDY OF MY ASTRO-NOMICAL CHARTS...

...AN ECLIPSE OF THE SUNS IS DUE TOMORROW AT THIS PRECISE MOMENT. IT IS AN EVENT WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY DISASTERS IN THE PAST.

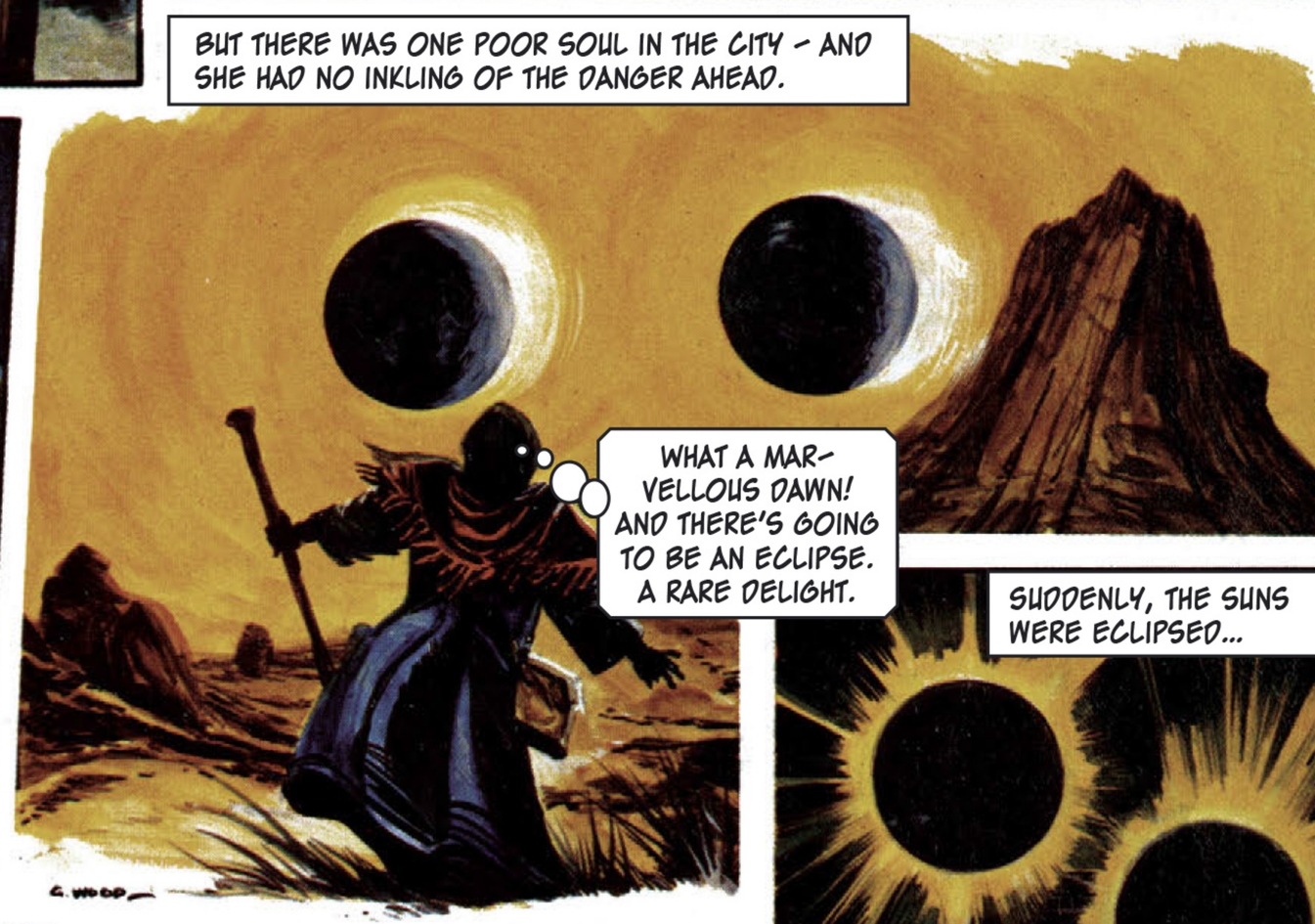
PREPARE FOR THE WORST, TRIGO, FOR WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT TOMORROW'S ECLIPSE. WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF WITH A VOLCANIC ERUPTION? OR HAS FATE A NEW AND EVEN MORE TERRIBLE EVIL TO UNLEASH UPON THE INNOCENT PEOPLE OF TRIGAN CITY?

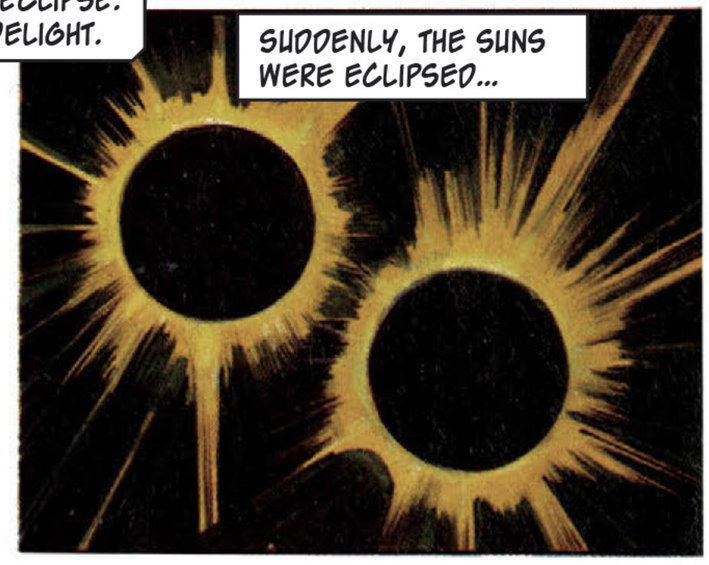
AT THE NEWS OF THE IMPENDING ECLIPSE, TRIGO WAS STUNG INTO ACTION.
WHO KNOWS WHAT DISASTER THIS ECLIPSE WILL BRING? WE CAN'T TAKE ANY CHANCES. I'M GOING TO EVACUATE THE CAPITAL UNTIL THE ECLIPSE IS OVER.
ISSUE ORDERS FOR TRIGAN CITY TO BE EVACUATED BY DUSK. I WANT EVERY ONE OUT OF THE PLACE – WITHOUT EXCEPTION. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!
BUT WHY... WHAT IS HAPPENING?
SOON THE WHOLE OF THE CITY'S COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK WAS ECHOING TRIGO'S ORDER.
BY THE ORDERS OF THE EMPEROR...
...TRIGAN CITY IS TO BE EVACUATED FORTHWITH...
...NO TIME MAY BE WASTED. YOUR LIVES MAY BE AT RISK.
NOTHING, I PRAY, MY FRIEND. BUT UNLESS WE EMPTY THE CITY WE COULD HAVE A MASSACRE ON OUR HANDS.
IT'S WAR OR AN EARTHQUAKE.
MAKE FOR THE VORG CAVES. WE'LL BE SAFE THERE.
GOODBYE TRIGAN CITY. IT'S BEEN NICE KNOWING YOU.
TRIGO, PERIC AND THEIR AIDES WERE THE LAST TO LEAVE THE CITY. THEIR DESTINATION WAS A STRONGHOLD IN THE HILLS.
THE LAST MAN HAS LEFT THE CITY, EXCELLENCY. IT IS DESERTED.
I HOPE IT REMAINS SO. NO ONE COULD HOPE TO SURVIVE IN A HOLOCAUST SUCH AS THAT WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE LAST ECLIPSE.
BUT PERIC WAS MISTAKEN IN HIS BELIEF THAT NO ONE WAS LEFT IN TRIGAN CITY. THERE WAS SOMEONE...
...AN OLD WOMAN WHO HAD NOT HEARD THE WARNING FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT SHE WAS DEAF.

HER NAME WAS ZARINE AND SHE WAS MAKING HER NIGHTLY PILGRIMAGE TO THE FOOT OF THE VOLCANO TO GATHER PLANTS FOR THE HERBAL REMEDIES SHE CONCOCTED FOR SALE TO HER NEIGHBOURS.
IT'S A FINE MOONLIT NIGHT FOR HERB GATHERING. BUT IT HAS A STRANGE FEELING OF EVIL ABOUT IT.


MEANWHILE, TRIGO AND PERIC HAD ARRIVED AT THEIR HILLTOP FORTRESS.
NOW THAT THE CITIZENS ARE SAFELY OUT OF THE CITY WE CAN SLEEP PEACEFULLY IN OUR BEDS TONIGHT.
YES, UNTIL DAWN. THAT IS WHEN THE ECLIPSE WILL OCCUR. AND WHO KNOWS WHAT STRANGE DISASTER WILL ACCOMPANY THAT EVENT?

MANY PEOPLE SPENT THE NIGHT ON THE HILLS WARMED BY BONFIRES. AS DAWN ARRIVED, THEY LOOKED EAGERLY TOWARDS THE VOLCANO.
LOOK EVERYBODY. THE ECLIPSE. IT'S DUE ANY MOMENT NOW.
HOPE TO GOODNESS THERE'S NO POOR SOUL LEFT IN THE CITY BELOW.

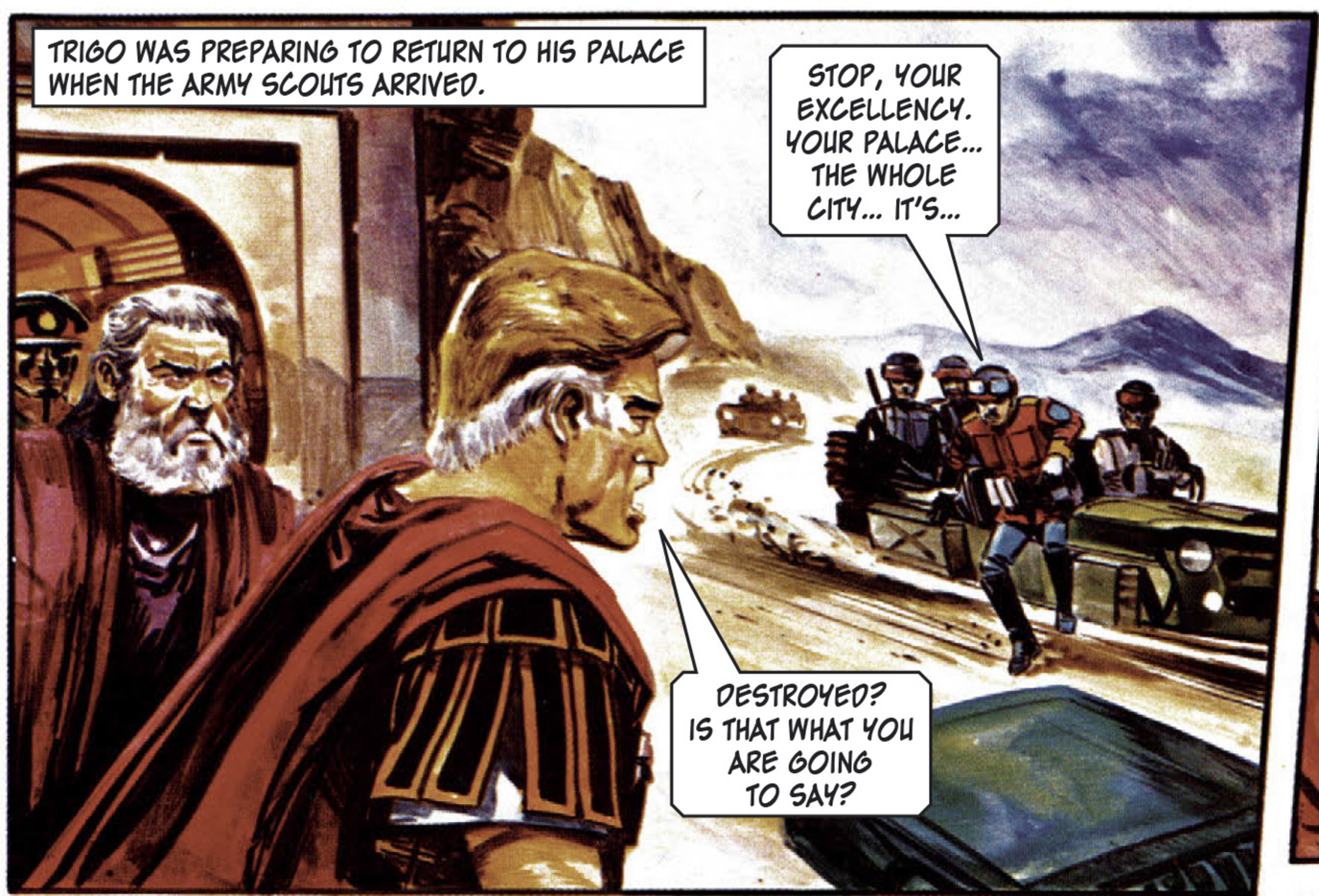

BUT THERE WAS ONE POOR SOUL IN THE CITY – AND SHE HAD NO INKLING OF THE DANGER AHEAD.
WHAT A MAR-VELLOUS DAWN! AND THERE'S GOING TO BE AN ECLIPSE. A RARE DELIGHT.


SUDDENLY, THE SUNS WERE ECLIPSED...

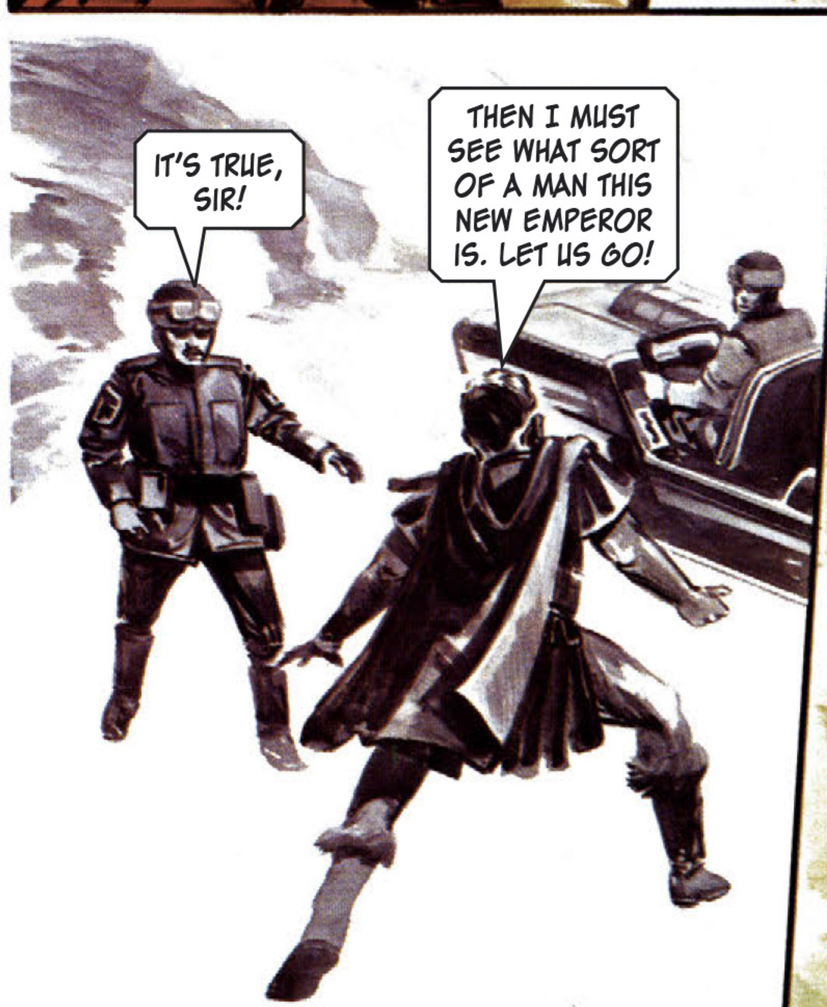
A CONSTANT ROAR AND A SULPHURIC SMELL FILLED THE AIR AS THE HOT AND HEAVING VOLCANO BURST ITS SIDES IN AN OUTPOURING OF FIRE AND MOLTEN LAVA.
AAAAAH!

BEFORE NOON, THE LAVA HAD COOLED AND FROM THE OPENINGS IN THE HILLSIDE THERE EMERGED...
I HAVE COME INTO THE SUNS' LIGHT AT LAST. LOOK UPON ME WELL, FOR I AM THE TRUE LEADER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. I AND MY PEOPLE HAVE RETURNED FROM THE DARKNESS TO RESUME OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE AS THE MOST POWERFUL NATION ON ELEKTON. THAT IS OUR DESTINY...AND NOTHING SHALL STOP US FULFILLING IT!

THE PEOPLE WHO HAD LIVED BENEATH THE PLANET'S SURFACE FOR CENTURIES NOW BEGAN MARCHING TO TRIGAN CITY LED BY THEIR CHIEF, JUNIX, AND HIS ADVISOR DANNO...
I SEE BUILDINGS AHEAD. THAT MUST BE THE LEGENDARY TRIGAN CITY OF WHICH OUR WISE MEN HAVE TOLD US. OUR RIGHTFUL INHERITANCE AS THE RULERS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE AWAITS US.
THE ANCIENT RECORDS TELL OF A PALACE. THAT WILL BE YOURS, EXCELLENCY.
DEVILS FROM THE CENTRE OF THE PLANET. CURSES BE UPON THEM ALL!
IT IS AS THE SEERS HAVE FORE-TOLD IN OUR BOOKS... A DESERTED CITY, A FINE PALACE AND THE RETURN OF THE RULER TO HIS EMPIRE.
OUR DESTINY IS BEING FULFILLED TODAY, DANNO.
UNAWARE OF THE EVENTS THAT WERE TAKING PLACE IN TRIGAN CITY, TRIGO WAS IN HIS MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD PREPARING TO RETURN TO HIS PALACE.
ALL VOLCANIC ACTIVITY HAS CEASED, EXCELLENCY. I HAVE SENT ARMY SCOUTS TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL IS SAFE BEFORE THE POPULACE IS PERMITTED TO RETURN.
A WISE MOVE, MARSHAL.
TRIGO WOULD NOT HAVE SPOKEN SO CONFIDENTLY HAD HE KNOWN WHAT HIS ARMY SCOUTS WERE AT THAT MOMENT ENCOUNTERING IN TRIGAN CITY.
BY ALL THE STARS! WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THEY ARE OCCUPYING THE WHOLE CITY - INCLUDING THE EMPEROR'S PALACE.
I AM KEEN TO PROVE THAT THE VOLCANIC ERUPTION WAS AN ACT OF NATURE ENTIRELY UN-CONNECTED WITH THE ECLIPSE. I WISH TO SCOTCH THE RUMOUR THAT EVIL ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES AN ECLIPSE OF THE TWIN SUNS.
INSIDE THE PALACE GROUNDS, THE LEADER PAUSED TO ADDRESS HIS FOLLOWERS.
AS THE SEERS HAVE FORETOLD, WE HAVE RETURNED TO OUR REAL HOME, TRIGAN CITY. THIS IS MY PALACE AND I SHALL RULE FROM HERE. YOU WILL CHOOSE YOUR HOMES FROM THE HOUSES IN THE CITY THEY ARE ALL EMPTY, AS THE PROPHETS FORESAW, SO OCCUPY THEM WITH OUR BLESSING.
WHEN TRIGO HEARS OF THIS, THERE'LL BE AN ERUPTION WORSE THAN THE VOLCANO'S.


TRIGO WAS PREPARING TO RETURN TO HIS PALACE WHEN THE ARMY SCOUTS ARRIVED.
STOP, YOUR EXCELLENCY. YOUR PALACE... THE WHOLE CITY... IT'S...
DESTROYED? IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO SAY?

NOT DESTROYED, SIRE, OCCUPIED – BY A BODY OF STRANGE PEOPLE WITH A LEADER WHO SAYS HE IS THE TRIGAN EMPEROR. HE IS LIVING IN YOUR PALACE NOW, EXCELLENCY!
AN IMPOSTOR? IN MY PALACE? IMPOSSIBLE!


IT'S TRUE, SIR!
THEN I MUST SEE WHAT SORT OF A MAN THIS NEW EMPEROR IS. LET US GO!

ALWAYS A MAN OF ACTION, TRIGO LEAPT INTO THE OFFICER'S ATMOSPHERE CAR, WHICH ROARED AWAY. SOON, THEY WERE AT THE PALACE GATES.
STOP – IN THE NAME OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE!
I AM THE TRIGAN EMPEROR AND THIS IS MY PALACE. PUT DOWN YOUR GUNS AND LET US THROUGH.

OUR ORDERS ARE TO DEFEND THE PALACE – BY FORCE IF NECESSARY.
BUT NOT AGAINST ME. TELL YOUR SO-CALLED EMPEROR THAT UNLESS HE LEAVES THE PALACE BY NIGHTFALL, I SHALL TAKE IT BY FORCE.

BACK AT HIS STRONGHOLD, TRIGO WAITED FOR WORD FROM HIS RIVAL. AT LAST IT CAME...
MESSAGE FROM THE PALACE, EXCELLENCY. THE SO-CALLED EMPEROR SAYS THAT ON NO ACCOUNT WILL HE AND HIS AIDES LEAVE THE PALACE. IN FACT, WE ARE ALL HENCEFORTH TO BE REGARDED AS OUTLAWS.

OUTLAWS, EH? SUMMON ALL MY FORCES, MARSHAL ZETTO, LAND AND AIR. THIS UPSTART MUST BE SHOWN THAT IT IS NOT WISE TO CROSS SWORDS WITH THE MIGHTIEST POWER ON ELEKTON.

ON THE HILLS OUTSIDE THE CITY, THE PEOPLE CAMPING THERE WERE ASTONISHED BY THE NEWS BROUGHT BY THE OLD WOMAN WHO WAS DEAF BUT FAR FROM DUMB.
THE DEMONS HAVE COME. TRIGAN CITY IS FULL OF DEMONS FROM INSIDE THE VOLCANO.
IS THIS TRUE?
SHE CAN'T HEAR YOU. SHE'S DEAF.
BUT SHE CAN LIP READ. WHAT IS THIS YOU ARE SAYING ABOUT DEMONS?

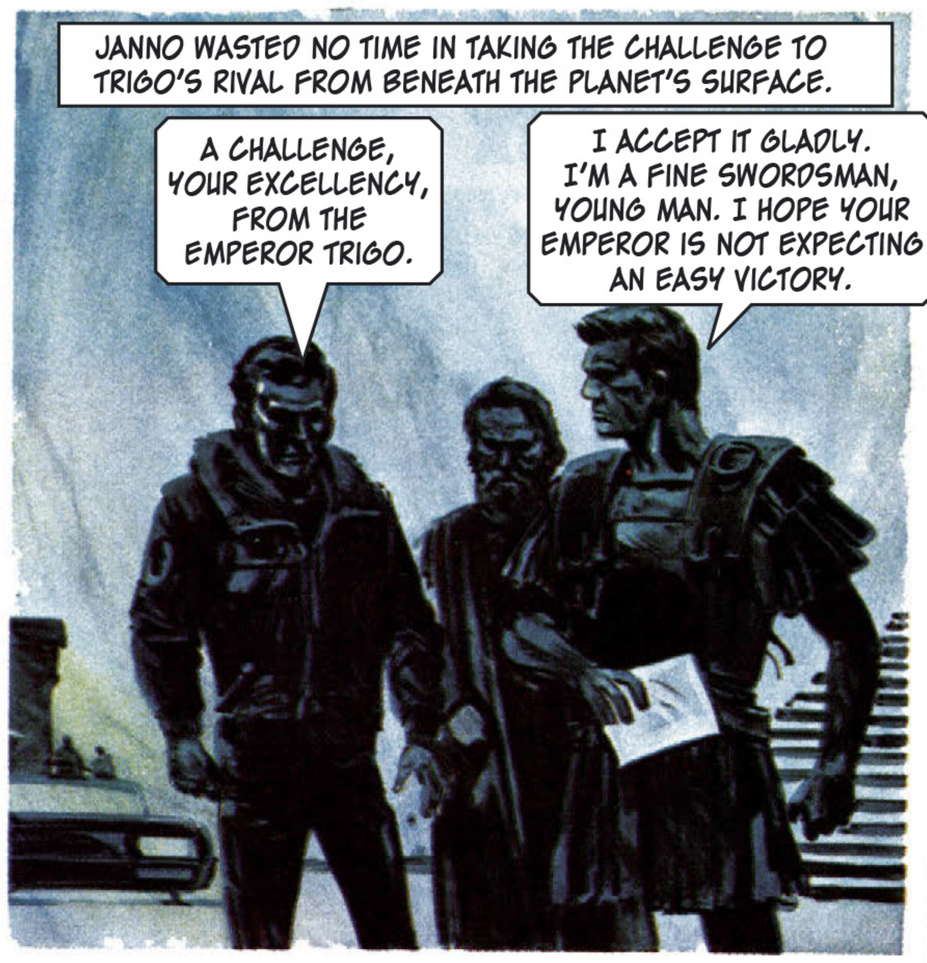
CRACKS OPENED UP IN THE VOLCANO – AND OUT OF THE CRACKS CAME AN ARMY OF PEOPLE. DEMONS, I CALL THEM. TRIGAN CITY IS FULL OF THEM.

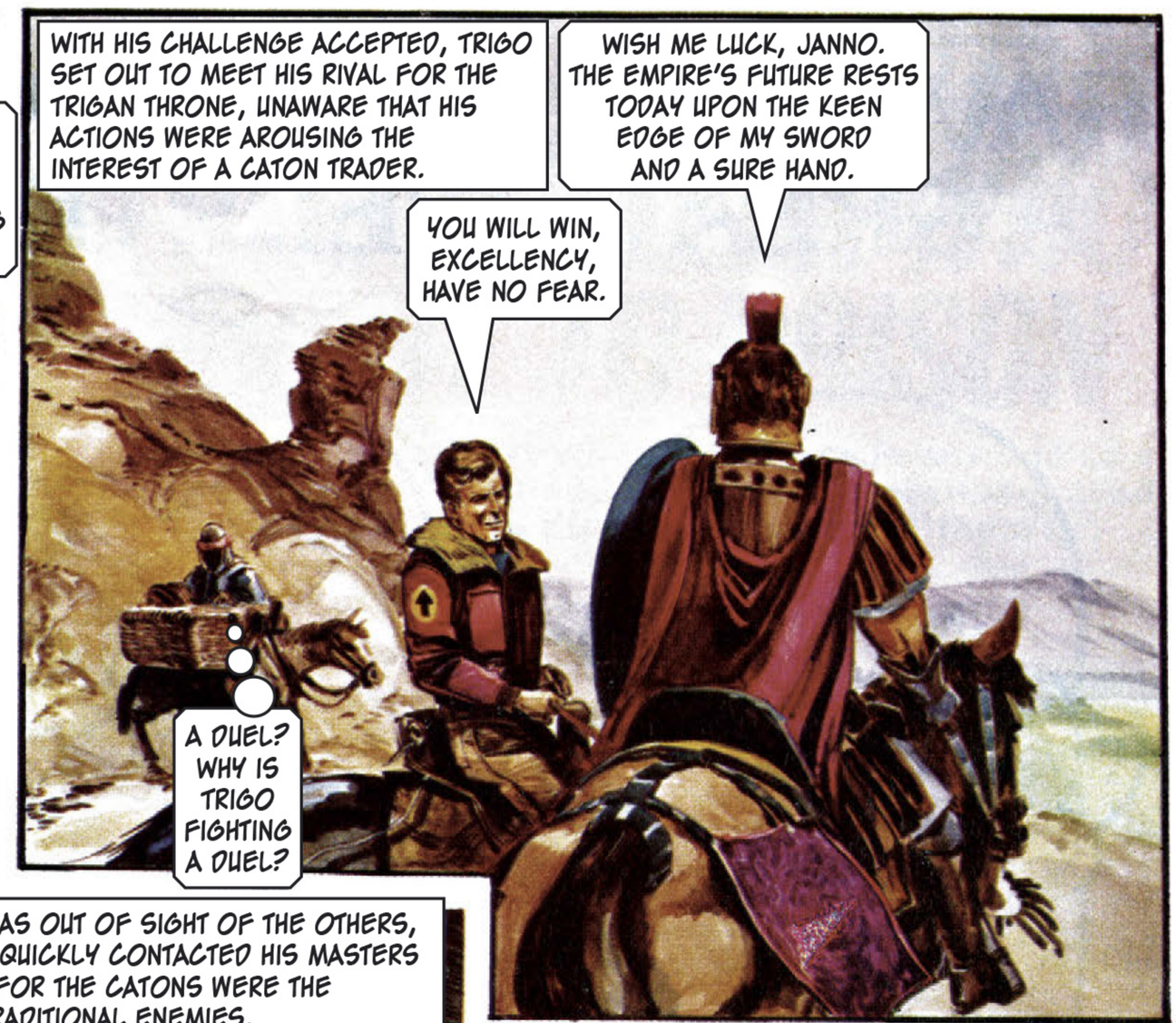
IF THIS IS A LIE, I'LL...
IT'S TRUE. I SAW THEM WITH MY OWN EYES.
THEN, BY ALL THE STARS, LET'S GET THEM OUT!

COME ON EVERYBODY. LET'S DRIVE THESE DEMONS BACK TO THE VOLCANO.
WE'LL RID OUR CITY OF THESE INVADERS.

TRIGO WAS PLANNING HIS NEXT MOVE WHEN JANNO ARRIVED.
THE PEOPLE ARE UP IN ARMS. THEY'RE MARCHING ON THE CITY. IT'LL BE MADNESS IF THEY GET OUT OF HAND.
THEY MUST BE STOPPED. I'LL GIVE ORDERS FOR THE TROOPS...
I WANT NO UN-NECESSARY BLOOD-SHED. TELL THE TROOPS TO KEEP THE PEOPLE IN CHECK.

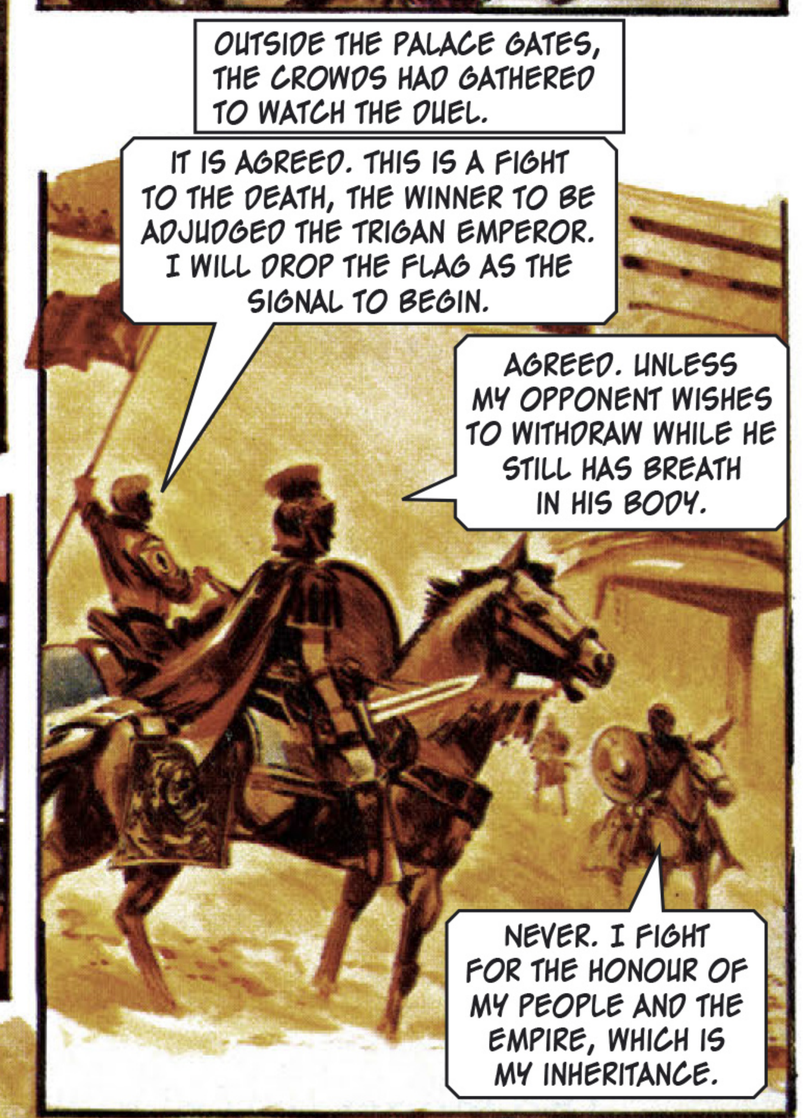
THE ARMY IS TO PLACE A CORDON AROUND THE CITY WALLS, ALLOWING NO ONE TO ENTER OR LEAVE. JANNO, TAKE A CHALLENGE TO THIS UPSTART OF AN EMPEROR AND ASK HIM TO MEET ME AT THE CITY'S LOKAN VICTORY GATE AT NOON. TELL HIM WE WILL SETTLE THE DISPUTE IN THE TIME-HONOURED WAY – WITH THE SWORD.

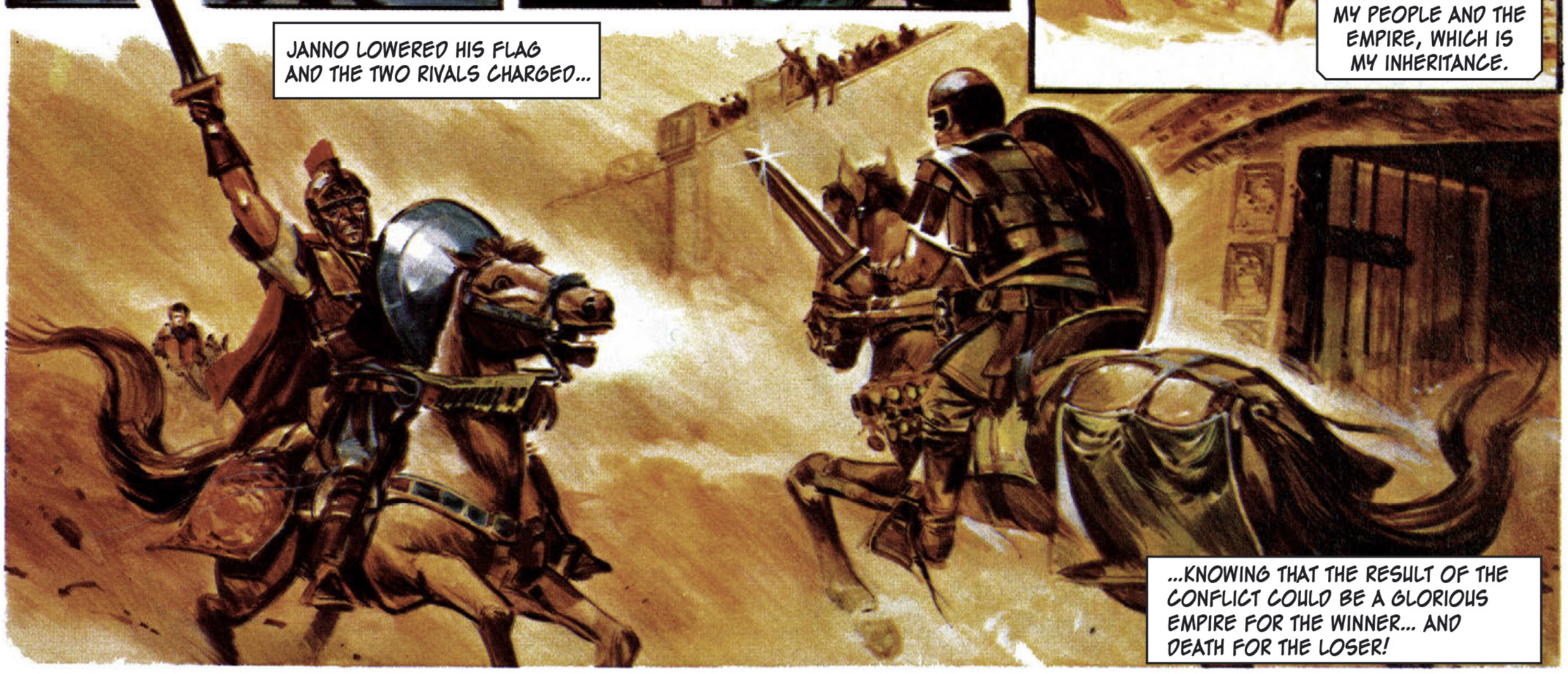

JANNO WASTED NO TIME IN TAKING THE CHALLENGE TO TRIGO'S RIVAL FROM BENEATH THE PLANET'S SURFACE.
A CHALLENGE, YOUR EXCELLENCY, FROM THE EMPEROR TRIGO.
I ACCEPT IT GLADLY. I'M A FINE SWORDSMAN, YOUNG MAN. I HOPE YOUR EMPEROR IS NOT EXPECTING AN EASY VICTORY.


WITH HIS CHALLENGE ACCEPTED, TRIGO SET OUT TO MEET HIS RIVAL FOR THE TRIGAN THRONE, UNAWARE THAT HIS ACTIONS WERE AROUSING THE INTEREST OF A CATON TRADER.
WISH ME LUCK, JANNO. THE EMPIRE'S FUTURE RESTS TODAY UPON THE KEEN EDGE OF MY SWORD AND A SURE HAND.
YOU WILL WIN, EXCELLENCY, HAVE NO FEAR.
A DUEL? WHY IS TRIGO FIGHTING A DUEL?

SOON, THE CATON SPY HAD HIS ANSWER.
YOU ARE RIGHT. THIS SWORD WILL MAKE THAT RIVAL OF MINE PAY DEARLY FOR INTRUDING UPON MY PALACE.
A RIVAL FOR TRIGO'S THRONE... IN THE PALACE... MY MASTERS WILL BE GLAD TO HEAR OF THIS.

ONCE HE WAS OUT OF SIGHT OF THE OTHERS, THE CATON QUICKLY CONTACTED HIS MASTERS BY RADIO, FOR THE CATONS WERE THE TRIGANS' TRADITIONAL ENEMIES.
THERE IS TROUBLE IN TRIGAN CITY. A NEW LEADER HAS ARISEN. TRIGO IS TO FIGHT HIM FOR THE THRONE.
YOU HAVE DONE WELL. REPORT WHEN THE DUEL BEGINS. MEANWHILE, WE WILL PREPARE A SURPRISE FOR TRIGO AND HIS BATTLING 'FRIEND'.

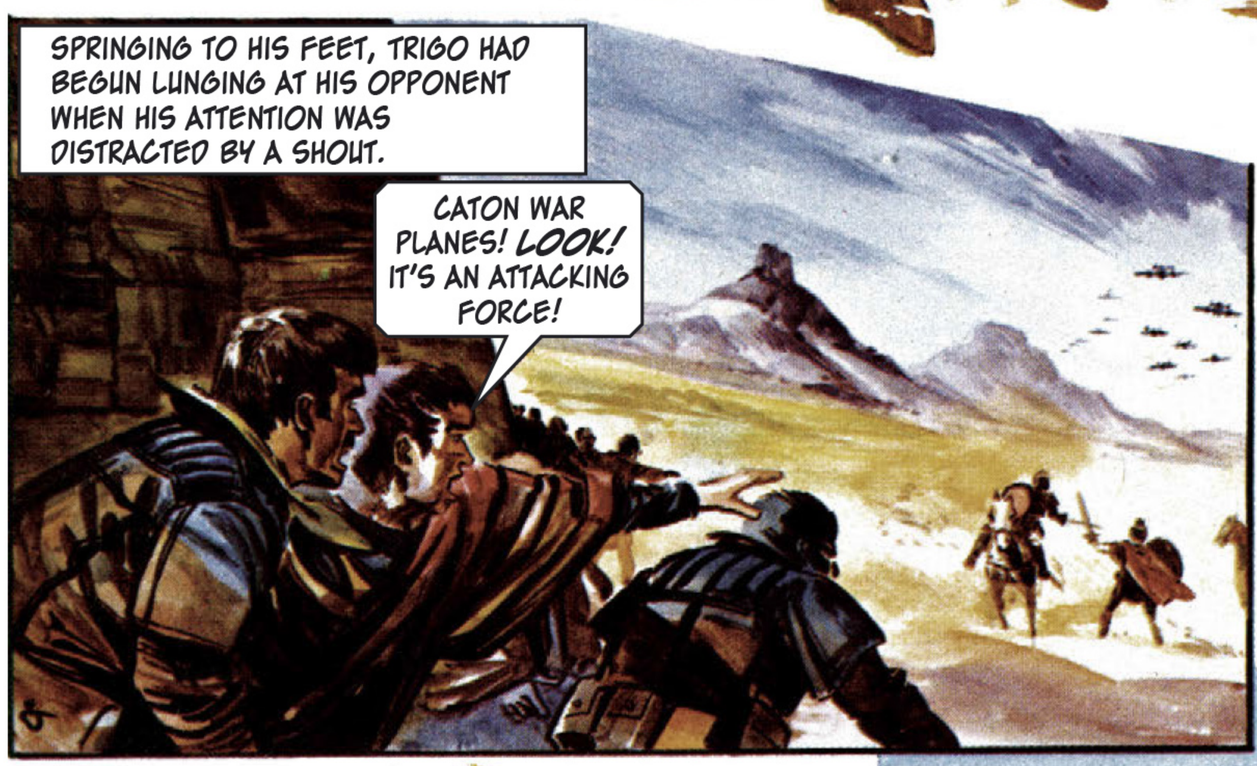

OUTSIDE THE PALACE GATES, THE CROWDS HAD GATHERED TO WATCH THE DUEL.
IT IS AGREED. THIS IS A FIGHT TO THE DEATH, THE WINNER TO BE ADJUDGED THE TRIGAN EMPEROR. I WILL DROP THE FLAG AS THE SIGNAL TO BEGIN.
AGREED. UNLESS MY OPPONENT WISHES TO WITHDRAW WHILE HE STILL HAS BREATH IN HIS BODY.
NEVER. I FIGHT FOR THE HONOUR OF MY PEOPLE AND THE EMPIRE, WHICH IS MY INHERITANCE.


JANNO LOWERED HIS FLAG AND THE TWO RIVALS CHARGED...
...KNOWING THAT THE RESULT OF THE CONFLICT COULD BE A GLORIOUS EMPIRE FOR THE WINNER... AND DEATH FOR THE LOSER!

WHILE THE ONLOOKERS HELD THEIR BREATH, TRIGO AND HIS RIVAL CHARGED.
BY THE STARS, THIS FELLOW KNOWS HOW TO SIT A KREED AND WIELD A SWORD.
A WORTHY OPPONENT AND A FINE SWORDSMAN. A PITY HE HAS TO DIE.

TRIGO SAW HIS OPPORTUNITY AND LUNGED...
...BUT HIS OPPONENT PARRIED THE BLOW EXPERTLY.

THEN TRIGO'S KREED STUMBLED AND...
SUBMIT AND I WILL SPARE YOU.
NEVER!


SPRINGING TO HIS FEET, TRIGO HAD BEGUN LUNGING AT HIS OPPONENT WHEN HIS ATTENTION WAS DISTRACTED BY A SHOUT.
CATON WAR PLANES! LOOK! IT'S AN ATTACKING FORCE!

MOMENTARILY OFF HIS GUARD, TRIGO HAD NO DEFENCE AGAINST JUNIX'S THRUST...
STOP THE FIGHT. THE CATONS ARE ATTACKING!
SEND OUT A RED ALERT. WHY DIDN'T WE GET AN EARLY WARNING OF THIS?

IN ANGER, TRIGO TURNED TO JUNIX...
IF WE HAD, IT WOULDN'T HAVE DONE ANY GOOD. THERE WAS NO ONE IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS ROOM TO ACT UPON IT. THE STAFF LEFT WHEN THE REST OF THE CITY WAS EVACUATED BEFORE THE ECLIPSE.

ENOUGH OF THIS TOM-FOOLERY. YOU AND I WILL GOVERN JOINTLY WHILE WE COPE WITH THE CATON INVASION.

TRIGO RUSHED INTO HIS PALACE AND SOON THE AIR WAS SIZZLING WITH HIS ORDERS.
AIR FLEET... SEEK AND DESTROY THE INVADERS...
REPORT ALL ENEMY MOVEMENT TO ME PERSONALLY...
...REPEL ALL GROUND ATTACKS...
SHOOT DOWN ALL ENEMY PLANES AT SIGHT.

BEFORE THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET COULD BECOME AIRBORNE, THE CATONS WERE ZOOMING OVER TRIGAN CITY.
THE PALACE AND THE CITY ARE TO BE DESTROYED! THOSE ARE OUR ORDERS!

WE SHALL RETURN WITH MORE BOMBS AGAIN AND AGAIN UNTIL TRIGO'S MIGHTY EMPIRE IS NOTHING MORE THAN A PILE OF RUBBLE.

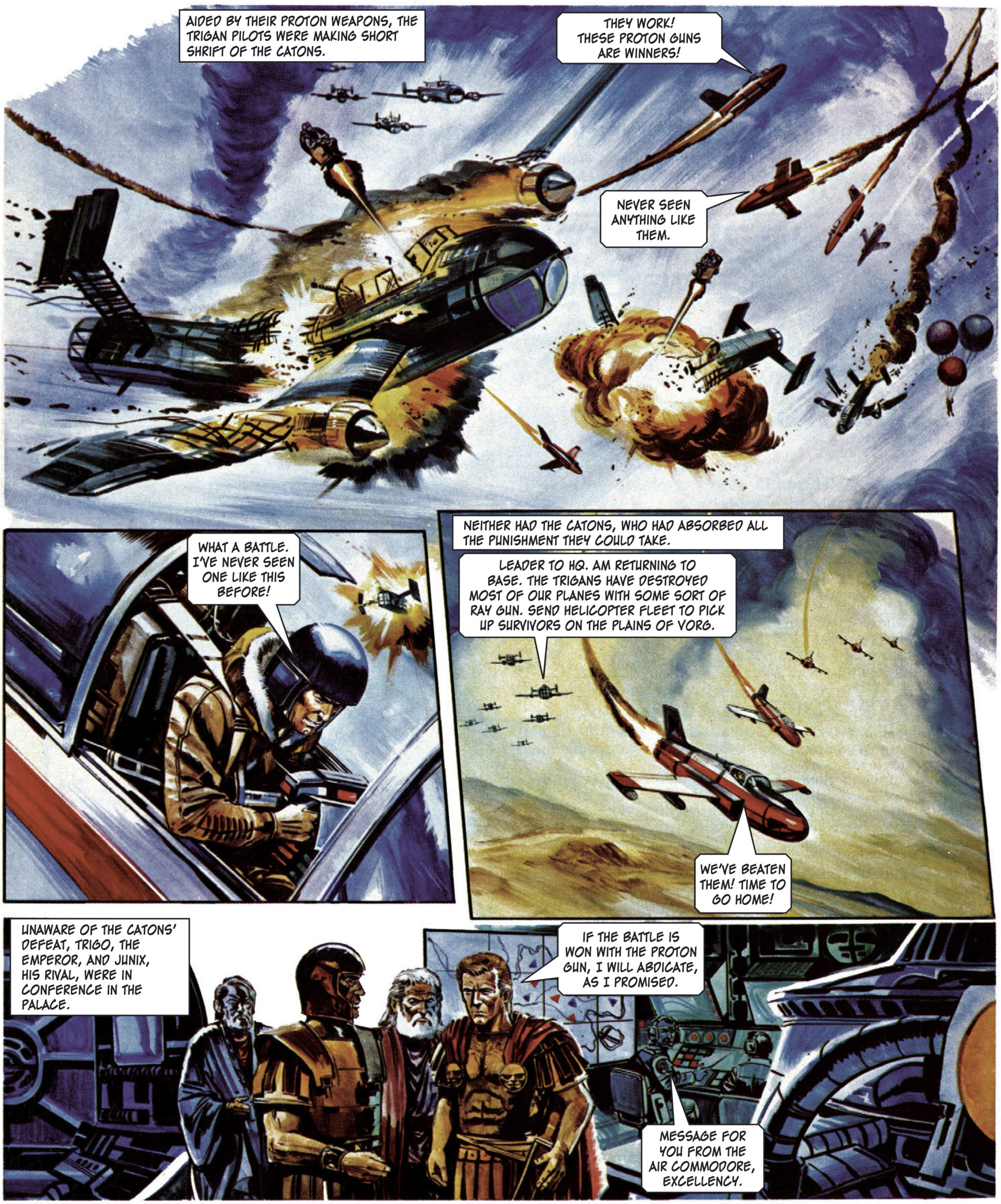
AS THE BOMBS BEGAN SHATTERING HIS PALACE, TRIGO AND JUNIX DIVED FOR SHELTER.
OUR FORCES WERE TAKEN UNAWARES. WE SHALL SOON HAVE THESE FIENDS AT OUR MERCY.
IF I WERE IN YOUR SHOES, I WOULDN'T BE SO SURE.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF, MY FRIEND.
I SHOULD BE WORRIED BECAUSE I ONLY KNOW OF ONE DEVICE TO BRING THOSE PLANES DOWN.

WHAT IS THAT DEVICE? SPEAK QUICKLY, MAN!
IT IS ONE OF OUR INVENTIONS. IT IS AT YOUR SERVICE! BUT IF YOU WANT TO BE SAVED FROM THE CATONS, THERE IS ONE CONCESSION YOU MUST MAKE. IF YOU REFUSE, YOUR PEOPLE MUST FACE THE CATONS – ALONE!

BOMBS WERE RAINING ON TRIGAN CITY FROM CATON WAR PLANES WHEN TRIGO SHOUTED ANGRILY AT JUNIX.
WHAT IS YOUR CONDITION, MAN? HURRY!
IT IS THIS. WHEN WE HAVE BEATEN THE CATONS, YOU WILL ABDICATE IN MY FAVOUR.
THERE WAS A HARD GLINT IN TRIGO'S EYES WHEN HE REPLIED.
FOR THE SAKE OF MY PEOPLE, I AGREE. BUT I WARN YOU THAT YOU WILL NOT FIND THE THRONE EASY TO HOLD. NOW LET'S SEE THE SECRET WEAPON YOU WERE BRAGGING ABOUT.
A LULL IN THE BOMBING GAVE THE PAIR A CHANCE TO ESCAPE FROM THEIR MAKESHIFT SHELTER.
SUMMON AN ARMOURED CAR AND I WILL SHOW YOU OUR SECRET WEAPON.
REQUEST PERIC AND MARSHAL ZETTO TO BRING A CAR TO THE PALACE GATES IMMEDIATELY!
BY THE TIME THEY GOT TO THE GATES, THE CAR AND ITS OCCUPANTS WERE WAITING.
WHERE TO, MY FRIEND? HURRY, BEFORE THE ATTACK IS RESUMED.
TO THE VOLCANO!
AS THEY DROVE, JUNIX TALKED...
AFTER LONG YEARS IN THE PLANET'S INTERIOR, WE LEARNT TO HARNESS THE FORCES OF NATURE WHICH WE FOUND THERE. ONE OF THESE WAS THE VOLCANO. ITS POWER IS NOW AT OUR COMMAND.
YOU HAVE FOUND A WAY OF CONTROLLING THE VOLCANO? THEN THE ERUPTION WAS OF YOUR MAKING.
IT WAS THE ONLY WAY WE COULD ESCAPE FROM THE PRISON TO WHICH THE EVILS OF FATE HAD COMMITTED US. AND POWER WE USED TO GAIN OUR FREEDOM CAN SAVE YOU FROM THE CATONS.
LEAVING THEIR CAR NEAR ONE OF THE VOLCANO'S FISSURES, THE PARTY HURRIED INSIDE.
OUR SECRET WEAPON IS IN HERE. IT IS A GUN.
WHAT FOOL'S ERRAND HAVE YOU BROUGHT US ON? WE HAVE THE FINEST GUNS IN THE EMPIRE ALREADY.
PROTON GUNS?

A PROTON GUN IS LIKE NO OTHER GUN. IT BOMBARDS ITS TARGET WITH PROTONS AND STRANGE THINGS START TO HAPPEN. ROCKS BECOME MOLTEN LAVA, AS YOU SAW.
AND WHAT WILL THE CATON PLANES BECOME? DO YOU KNOW?
WAIT AND SEE, MY FRIEND. COME! WE WILL GIVE THE CATON'S THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OF THEIR LIVES.
SUPPLIES OF THE PROTON GUNS WERE RUSHED TO THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET, LED BY JANNO AND ROFFA.
SCRAMBLE! ALL PLANES TO BE AIRBORNE. CATON WAR FLEET APPROACHING.
LEADER TO ALL PILOTS. FIRING INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOW. UPON SIGHTING ENEMY, SET AUTOMATIC PILOT, OPEN CANOPY, TAKE VISUAL AIM AND FIRE.
LET'S HOPE OUR HARNESSES HOLD US AGAINST THE TERRIFIC SUCTION FROM OUR OPEN CANOPIES.
THEY WERE OVER THE PLAINS OF VORG WHEN THEY HAD A CHANCE TO PUT THEIR WEAPONS TO THE TEST.
AM ENGAGING CATON FIGHTER. DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE PROTON GUNS DO, BUT I CAN SEE ONE CATON PILOT WHO IS ABOUT TO FIND OUT.
STEADYING HIS ARM, JANNO TOOK AIM AND FIRED...
BY ALL THE STARS, WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY PLANE? IT'S COLLAPSING. I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE.
DESPERATELY – HOPEFULLY – THE PILOT TUGGED AT HIS EJECTOR LEVER!


AIDED BY THEIR PROTON WEAPONS, THE TRIGAN PILOTS WERE MAKING SHORT SHRIFT OF THE CATONS.
THEY WORK! THESE PROTON GUNS ARE WINNERS!
NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THEM.
WHAT A BATTLE. I'VE NEVER SEEN ONE LIKE THIS BEFORE!
NEITHER HAD THE CATONS, WHO HAD ABSORBED ALL THE PUNISHMENT THEY COULD TAKE.
LEADER TO HQ. AM RETURNING TO BASE. THE TRIGANS HAVE DESTROYED MOST OF OUR PLANES WITH SOME SORT OF RAY GUN. SEND HELICOPTER FLEET TO PICK UP SURVIVORS ON THE PLAINS OF VORG.
WE'VE BEATEN THEM! TIME TO GO HOME!
UNAWARE OF THE CATONS' DEFEAT, TRIGO, THE EMPEROR, AND JUNIX, HIS RIVAL, WERE IN CONFERENCE IN THE PALACE.
IF THE BATTLE IS WON WITH THE PROTON GUN, I WILL ABDICATE, AS I PROMISED.
MESSAGE FOR YOU FROM THE AIR COMMODORE, EXCELLENCY.

GRIMLY, TRIGO LISTENED TO THE AIR COMMODORE'S NEWS.
THE CATONS HAVE LEFT THE SCENE OF BATTLE. IT IS VICTORY FOR THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET, EXCELLENCY.

YOU HAVE WON OUR WAGER. YOUR GUN HAS DEFEATED OUR INVADERS AND, ACCORDING TO OUR PACT, YOU ARE NOW THE TRIGAN EMPEROR.

THE EMPIRE IS YOURS. BUT SEE HOW LONG YOU CAN HOLD IT!

WHERE TO, EXCELLENCY?
TO THE PLAINS OF VORG. I KNOW OF A CAVE THERE THAT WILL MAKE A COMFORTABLE HOME FOR ME.
BUT EXCELLENCY, DO YOU REALLY MEAN TO GO INTO EXILE?

I HAVE GIVEN MY PROMISE TO THE NEW EMPEROR THAT THE THRONE WILL BE HIS. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR TWO EMPERORS IN THE PALACE.

TRIGO WENT INTO EXILE AND PEACE RETURNED TO TRIGAN CITY. THE LONG-ESTABLISHED CITIZENS SETTLED THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH THE NEW ARRIVALS AND AGREED TO SHARE THE CITY. BUT THIS NEWFOUND TRANQUILLITY WAS TO RECEIVE A SHATTERING BLOW.
THE CITY'S TOO CROWDED. THERE'S BOUND TO BE AN OUTBREAK OF DISEASE SOONER OR LATER.
IT'S HAPPENED ALREADY.

IT'S THE CREEPING PLAGUE. IT'S KNOCKING THE NEW ARRIVALS DOWN LIKE NINEPINS. THEY'VE NO NATURAL IMMUNITY TO IT, LIKE WE HAVE.
POOR DEVILS... POOR DEVILS!
THE TWO MEN WENT ON THEIR WAY, KNOWING THAT THE ONLY ANSWER TO THE PLAGUE WAS ONE WHICH THE NEWCOMERS MIGHT FIND ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCEPT.

ANXIOUSLY, THE NEW TRIGAN EMPEROR, JUNIX, TOURED THE STREETS OF TRIGAN CITY.
LAST NIGHT MY WIFE COLLAPSED. TODAY, THE PLAGUE STRUCK AT ME.
WHAT IS MAKING US ILL, EXCELLENCY?
TAKE HEART, MY PEOPLE. OUR DOCTORS WILL FIND A CURE.
HAS THE CAUSE OF THIS PLAGUE BEEN FOUND?
YES, EXCELLENCY. IT IS A VIRUS TO WHICH THE SURFACE TRIGANS ARE IMMUNE. BUT WE HAVE NO PROTECTION AGAINST IT... AND NO CURE!
IF NO CURE IS FOUND, THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE THING FOR ME TO DO.
WHAT IS THAT EXCELLENCY?
THE SOLUTION I HAVE IN MIND IS PERHAPS TOO DRASTIC FOR OUR PEOPLE TO ACCEPT.
MEANWHILE, TRIGO, IN EXILE, WAS ALSO CONSIDERING A DRASTIC COURSE OF ACTION.
WITH NO EMPIRE ON THE SURFACE, I MUST LOOK FOR ANOTHER WITHIN THE PLANET, AS JUNIX ONCE DID.
NO, EXCELLENCY, IT WOULD BE A LIVING DEATH FOR YOU.
I CAN SEE NO FUTURE FOR MYSELF ON ELEKTON WITH JUNIX AT THE HEAD OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
COME QUICKLY, EXCELLENCY! STARTLING NEWS FROM THE PALACE!

AFTER HURRYING OUT OF THE TUNNEL, TRIGO AND PERIC WERE SOON SPEEDING TOWARDS THE PALACE IN ROFFA'S ATMOSPHERE CAR.
WHEN THIS VISIT TO THE PALACE IS OVER, YOU WILL TAKE ME BACK TO THE VOLCANO IMMEDIATELY! UNDERSTOOD!
I RATHER THINK YOU WILL HAVE A DIFFERENT ORDER FOR ME AFTER YOU HAVE SEEN EMPEROR JUNIX, EXCELLENCY.
JUNIX WAS WAITING FOR TRIGO IN THE PALACE THRONE ROOM.
YOUR THRONE, EXCELLENCY! PLEASE RESUME YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE AT THE HEAD OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE.
BUT WHAT IS THIS? WHY HAVE YOU ABDICATED?
I AM TAKING MY PEOPLE BACK TO THEIR HOME IN THE CENTRE OF THE PLANET. THEY WILL BE SAFE THERE FROM DISEASES TO WHICH THEY HAVE NO DEFENCE.
HERALDS WERE SENT AROUND THE TOWN TO TELL THE PEOPLE OF JUNIX'S DECISION.
MUST YOU GO, SILVEX? WE'VE BECOME SUCH GOOD FRIENDS.
THE EMPEROR HAS ABDICATED. ALL UNDERGROUND PEOPLE WILL RETURN HOME!
AND SO BEGAN AN AMAZING EXODUS.
GOODBYE, TRIGO. WE SHALL BE HAPPIER IN THE SURROUNDINGS WE KNOW BEST. BUT LET US BE FRIENDS IN PEACE AND ALLIES IN WAR. ARE WE AGREED?
WE ARE AGREED. FAREWELL, MY FRIEND. I SHALL VISIT YOU, AND YOU SHALL VISIT ME. BETWEEN US WE SHALL ENSURE CONTINUING HAPPINESS FOR OUR PEOPLES.
IN TIME, THE SCARS OF WAR HEALED AND TRIGAN CITY RETURNED TO NORMAL WITH TRIGO ONCE MORE AS THE EMPEROR.

LXXIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE ZONDAN AFFAIR

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Story by Ken Roscoe

Art by Gerry Wood

OF ALL THE GOVERNMENT STRONGHOLDS IN TRIGAN CITY, NONE WAS MORE IMPREGNABLE THAN THE TREASURY BUILDING, WHERE THE NATION'S WEALTH WAS DEPOSITED.
AM APPROACHING TREASURY BUILDING. PREPARE TO ADMIT US WITHOUT DELAY.
YOU ARE CLEARED FOR IMMEDIATE ADMISSION.
STEEL DOORS CLANGED BEHIND THE TRANSPORTER WHICH WAS SOON PULLING UP AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TREASURY'S THIEF-PROOF VAULTS.
THE CONSIGNMENT IS READY FOR YOU. COME!
THE TWO MEN FOLLOWED THE KEEPER OF THE EMPIRE'S WEALTH INTO THE ECHOING VAULTS WHERE THEY SAW...
THERE IT IS... A FORTUNE IN TRIGONIUM TEN MILLION THULLARS OF IT!
LOADING THE TRANSPORTER DID NOT TAKE LONG, AND SOON THE CONVOY WAS ON ITS WAY TO THE SPACE PORT...
THE SOONER IT'S ON THE SPACESHIP TO TETRODE, THE BETTER. SOME THIEVES WOULD RISK LIFE IMPRISONMENT TO GET THEIR HANDS ON THIS.
...BEARING A LARGE CONSIGNMENT OF THE PRECIOUS METAL UPON WHICH THE TRIGAN EMPIRE'S WEALTH WAS BASED – TRIGONIUM!
THE TRANSFER OF THE PRECIOUS METAL FROM THE TRANSPORTER TO THE SPACE FREIGHTER WAS WATCHED BY NONE OTHER THAN TRIGO AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISER, PERIC.
WHAT A HARD BARGAIN THOSE TETRODES DROVE FOR THE SPACE CRAFT THEY ARE BUILDING FOR US. SENDING SO MUCH TRIGONIUM IN ONE FREIGHTER IS HIGHLY HAZARDOUS.
HAZARDOUS, EXCELLENCY? SURELY NOT!
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PERHAPS I AM FOOLISH TO BE ALARMED. BUT I HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS OF PIRACY IN THE FAR REACHES OF THE GALAXY.
BUT GALACTIC PIRATES COULD NEVER ATTACK A BULLION FREIGHTER! HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE NEUTRON SHIELDS WHICH AUTOMATICALLY DESTROY ANY ATTACKING CRAFT?

YOU DO WELL TO DEFEND YOUR INVENTION, PERIC. BUT NEUTRON SHIELDS NEED A CONSTANT CURRENT TO MAINTAIN THEM. AND POWER SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO FAIL.

TRIGO'S FEARS WOULD HAVE EVAPORATED HAD HE SEEN THE FREIGHTER'S EFFICIENT CREW AT WORK.
ALL SYSTEMS OPERATING. NEUTRON SHIELD ACTIVE. APPROACHING ZERO GRAVITY PULL. GIVE CHANGE OF COURSE - NOW!
COURSE 040. CHANGE COURSE AT ZERO TRIGAN GRAVITY. HOW ABOUT A TIME LEAP, SIR?

A TIME LEAP WAS A WAY OF SHORTENING A JOURNEY BY LEAPING FORWARD IN TIME. IT WAS DANGEROUS...VERY DANGEROUS.
NO TIME LEAP! NOT WHEN THERE'S A DANGER OF THE TRIGONIUM DEMATERIALISING.
MAY I SPEAK TO YOU, SIR?

I'VE A SMALL REQUEST TO MAKE, SIR.
WE'RE AT ZERO GRAVITY AND I'M DUE TO MAKE A COURSE CHANGE. HANG ON A MOMENT!

I'VE TIMED MY VISIT CORRECTLY, THEN. I GUESSED A COURSE CHANGE WAS ABOUT DUE.

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THE CHANGE OF COURSE, SIR. BUT IT'S NOT TETRODE WE'RE GOING TO. TELL YOU NAVIGATOR TO PLOT A COURSE TO THE PLANET ZONDA. AND NO TRICKS. I'VE AN ITCHY TRIGGER FINGER.
A CHILL OF FEAR SET THE FIRST OFFICER'S SPINE TINGLING, FOR ZONDA WAS THE PLANET-PRISON OF YARNA'S CRIMINAL OUTCASTS.

NEWS OF THE HIJACKING WAS FLASHED TO TRIGO, WHO AT ONCE SENT FOR HIS CHIEF INTERGALACTIC SPECIAL AGENT, BRINKA.
TEN MILLION THULLARS, A FREIGHTER AND ITS CREW... ALL VANISHED WITHOUT TRACE. CONTACT WAS LOST AT THIS POINT.
SEEMS LIKE A HIJACK, SIR, ONE OF MANY REPORTED THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
ONE HIJACK TOO MANY, BRINKA. IF IT'S THE WORK OF AN ORGANISED GANG, I WANT YOU TO TRACK THEM DOWN. THERE'S ANOTHER CONSIGNMENT OF TRIGONIUM DUE OUT TOMORROW – AND I WANT YOU TO BE WITH IT!
I'LL BE THERE, SIR.
BRINKA WAS THERE – UNRECOGNISED AMONG THE CREW OF THE BULLION FREIGHTER.
COURSE CHANGE DUE SOON. THAT COULD BE WHEN THE HIJACKERS WOULD ACT – IF THERE ARE ANY ABOARD THIS HIGH-SPEED TREASURY.
THERE WERE – AS BRINKA SOON FOUND OUT.
THIS IS A HIJACK. WE'RE SETTING COURSE FOR ZONDA. CO-OPERATE AND NOBODY WILL BE HURT.
ZONDA...THAT'S WHERE THE PLANETS SEND THEIR TOUGHEST CRIMINALS.
BACK TO WORK! AND NO TRICKS, UNLESS YOU WANT TO BE DRILLED FULL OF NEUTRONS.
WITH NO OPTION BUT TO OBEY, THE CREW SET THEIR SPACE CRAFT ON A COURSE FOR ZONDA, WHERE CRIME WAS KING.
TRIGAN FREIGHTER Z25 TO ZONDA CONTROL. ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL, INTERNATIONAL SPACE TIME, 2125. HAVE WE PERMISSION TO LAND?
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE, CAPTAIN. WE ARE TAKING OVER THE RUNNING OF YOUR SHIP FROM HERE. OUR HOMING BEACON IS BRINGING YOU DOWN, SO SWITCH OFF YOUR NEUTRON SHIELD.
WITH ITS RETRO ROCKETS FIRING, THE TRIGAN CRAFT LOADED WITH BULLION MADE A SOFT LANDING ON ZONDA.
THIS MAKES THE TOTAL HIJACKED TO DATE TWENTY MILLION THULLARS.
AND MORE TO FOLLOW. COME ON – LET'S SEE TO UNLOADING.

PLAYING HIS PART TO THE FULL, BRINKA HELPED WITH THE UNLOADING.
YOU IN THE TRANSPORTER - STAY WITH THE BULLION TO UNLOAD IT AT THE OTHER END. UNDERSTOOD?
YES SIR!
WHEN THE LOADING WAS COMPLETE, THE TRANSPORTER SPED AWAY TO A STRANGE STRONGHOLD.
SEMI-SPHERES CONTAINED THE PLANET'S TREASURE, WHILE IN THE ESCAPE-PROOF CAMP AROUND IT WERE THE IMPRISONED CREWS OF THE HIJACKED CRAFT.
IN THIS COMPOUND, BRINKA WORKED WITH THE OTHER PRISONERS.
WE HAVE ENOUGH WEALTH HERE TO BUY THE FINEST WEAPONS SCIENCE CAN DEVISE.
THEY WILL GIVE US THE POWER TO RULE THE UNIVERSE INSTEAD OF BEING ITS OUTCASTS.
WE CAME HERE AS PRISONERS. THE UNIVERSE WHICH CAST US ASIDE WILL SOON LEARN THAT WE SHALL CONQUER IT AS EASILY AS WE OVER-POWERED THE GUARDS SET OVER US ON THIS PRISON-PLANET.
IN HIS EAGERNESS TO HEAR THE MEN'S CONVERSATION, BRINKA EDGED CLOSER.
DOLT? WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
YOU WERE EAVESDROPPING, WEREN'T YOU?
CURIOSITY IS A DANGEROUS HABIT ON THIS PLANET. A VERY DANGEROUS HABIT INDEED!
THERE WAS A CLICK AND A HUM AS THE MEN ACTIVATED THEIR NEUTRON GUNS. ALL THAT WAS NEEDED NOW WAS A SLIGHT TOUCH ON THE TRIGGER TO RELEASE THEIR STREAM OF DEATH.

KNOWING THAT A FALSE MOVE COULD BE FATAL, BRINKA FACED HIS TWO ADVERSARIES CALMLY.
YOU WERE EAVESDROPPING ON US. CURIOSITY CAN BE A KILLER, AS YOU MAY SOON FIND OUT. WHO ARE YOU?
I'M A TRIGAN. I WAS IN THE CREW OF THE HIJACKED BULLION CARRIER.
BRINKA WAS HUSTLED INTO AN ADJOINING ROOM.
FROM TRIGAN, EH? WE MAY YET SPARE YOUR LIFE – PROVIDING YOU CAN GIVE US THE ANSWERS TO SOME QUESTIONS.
WE KNOW THAT TRIGAN IS SENDING REGULAR SUPPLIES OF BULLION TO TETRODE TO PAY FOR SPACE CRAFT. WE HAVE INTERCEPTED TWO OF THESE FLIGHTS. WHEN IS THE FIRST OF THE TETRODE CRAFT TO BE DELIVERED?
BRINKA'S MIND RACED. TO GAIN HIS FREEDOM, HE HAD TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION PLAUSIBLY.
IT'S A LONG-TERM PROGRAMME, OF COURSE. THE FIRST CRAFT IS READY. THE BULLION YOU HIJACKED WAS TO BE TRIGAN'S PAYMENT FOR IT.
PERHAPS NOW THAT TRIGAN NO LONGER HAS THAT MONEY, TETRODE WILL BE GLAD TO FIND ANOTHER CUSTOMER.
TETRODE WOULD NEVER RELEASE THE CRAFT TO YOU. THEIR NEGOTIATIONS ARE ONLY WITH TRIGO.
WE WOULDN'T WISH TO DISTURB THOSE ARRANGE-MENTS. BUT WE MIGHT PERSUADE TRIGO TO CONDUCT THEM ON OUR BEHALF, DON'T YOU THINK?

THE TWO MEN HURRIED OUT OF THE ROOM, LEAVING BRINKA WITH A WARNING...
YOU'RE FREE TO GO WHERE YOU LIKE – IN THE COMPOUND. DON'T ATTEMPT TO LEAVE IT. OUR GUARDS HAVE VERY ITCHY TRIGGER FINGERS.
BUT IT WAS A WARNING BRINKA HAD NO INTENTION OF HEEDING. PARKED OUTSIDE WAS THE BULLION TRANSPORTER. BRINKA DROVE IT IN CLOSE PURSUIT OF THE TWO MEN, FIRST HAVING CONVINCED THE GUARDS THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO FOLLOW THEM.
I HAVE AN IDEA THAT WILL PUT THAT SPACE CRAFT AND MANY OTHERS WITHIN OUR GRASP. I THINK HIS HIGHNESS WILL LIKE IT.
I MUST FIND OUT WHAT THESE MEN ARE UP TO AND GET WORD TO TRIGO ON ELEKTON.
SWIFTLY, THE MEN'S HOVERCAR TRAVELLED OVER THE ROCKY TERRAIN AND UP A RIVER.
IT IS STRANGE THAT NONE HAS EVER SET EYES ON HIS MAJESTY!
AND YET TO DEFY THIS UNSEEN RULER SPELLS INSTANT DEATH.
IN THERE? IS THAT WHERE THIS PLANET'S MASTERMIND LIVES?
AFTER WADING ACROSS THE RIVER, BRINKA CREPT INTO THE CAVE AFTER THE TWO MEN.
WE REQUEST AN AUDIENCE WITH HIS HIGHNESS.
OUR PLAN WILL BRING GREAT POWER TO THE PLANET.
YOU MAY APPROACH HIS MAJESTY.
SO THAT'S THEIR RULER! IT'S NOT A LIVING BEING BUT IT HAS A LOOK OF EVIL THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!
CAUTIOUSLY, BRINKA EDGED HIMSELF INTO A POSITION FROM WHICH HE COULD SEE THE RULER'S RECEPTION CHAMBER. THE SIGHT THAT MET HIS EYES MADE HIS HEART RACE WITH TERROR.

HORRIFIED, BRINKA STARED AT THE APPARITION.
WHAT DO YOU WANT OF YOUR GOD?
WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE BULLION WE HIJACKED FROM TRIGAN WAS TO BE USED FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE.
A PURPOSE VITAL TO TRIGAN!
THE EMPEROR TRIGO WAS INTENDING TO BUY A SPACE CRAFT FROM TETRODE WITH IT. COULD WE NOT SEND THE BULLION TO TETRODE?
WE WOULD BE DISGUISED AS EMISSARIES FROM TRIGO. AND WE WOULD BRING THE CRAFT BACK TO OUR PLANET.
YOUR PLAN IS A GOOD ONE. WITH THAT SUPERIOR WAR VESSEL WE SHALL HAVE POWER TO CONQUER ALL AND I SHALL BE THE SUPREME RULER OF THE GALAXY.
ALL PRAISES TO HIS MAJESTY.
GLORY BE TO HE WHO HAS NO FAULTS AND DOES NOT PARDON THEM IN OTHERS.
BRINKA SHIVERED WHEN A SINISTER NOTE ENTERED THE IDOL'S VOICE.
WE HAVE GAINED WEALTH BY STEALING TRIGONIUM, THE GALAXY'S MOST PRECIOUS METAL. BUT WE WILL GAIN POWER BEYOND ALL COMPREHENSION IF WE CAPTURE THE GALAXY'S GREATEST AND MOST REVERED EMPEROR.
YOU MEAN...
TRIGO?
EMPEROR TRIGO OF ELEKTON MUST BE KIDNAPPED AND BROUGHT BEFORE ME HERE. I LEAVE THE DETAILS OF THE OPERATION TO YOU. BUT I DEMAND SUCCESS!

UNSEEN BY THE OTHERS, BRINKA CREPT OUT OF THE SANCTUARY.
THIS IS BRINKA REPORTING, EXCELLENCY. THE TRIGONIUM HAS BEEN HIJACKED TO THE PRISON PLANET, ZONDA. IT IS TO BE USED TO BUY A SUPER WAR CRAFT FROM TETRODE. BUT THERE'S WORSE NEWS THAN THAT.
WE CAN SNATCH YOU OFF THE PLANET IF YOU ARE IN DANGER.
ON ELEKTON, TRIGO WAITED ANXIOUSLY FOR BRINKA'S REPLY.
I AM NOT IN DANGER, EXCELLENCY. BUT YOU ARE! THE ZONDANS PLAN TO KIDNAP YOU AND HOLD THE EMPIRE TO RANSOM.
KIDNAP ME? IMPOSSIBLE! UNLESS....
TO KIDNAP ME, THE ZONDANS WOULD HAVE TO HIJACK MY ROYAL INTERPLANETARY TRANSPORTER WHEN I AM MAKING MY GOODWILL VISIT TO MURIMO SHORTLY. SURELY, THEY WOULDN'T ATTEMPT THAT?
BE ON YOUR GUARD, EXCELLENCY! GOODBYE!
THE PLANS ARE FINALISED FOR MY GOOD-WILL TOUR?
TRIGO TURNED AWAY TO HIS CLOSEST FRIEND AND ADVISER, PERIC, APPROACHING.
THEY ARE, EXCELLENCY. COLONEL KRUNEX WILL PILOT THE CRAFT HIMSELF. HE HAS HAND-PICKED HIS CREW FROM THE BEST MEN IN THE TRIGAN AIR FLEET.
SO I DO NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT A KIDNAP ATTEMPT? WITH SUCH A CREW IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, EH?
YOU WILL BE AS SAFE ON THAT CRAFT AS YOU ARE IN YOUR OWN PALACE.
QUITE SO! UNLESS I CHOOSE TO ALLOW MYSELF TO BE KID-NAPPED AND THE CRAFT HIJACKED. THAT WOULD BE A DIFFERENT STORY. WE MIGHT EVEN GIVE THE ZONDANS A SHOCK THEY HAD NOT BARGAINED FOR, EH PERIC?

THE HIJACK THREAT BROUGHT URGENT PLEAS FROM PERIC AND TRIGO'S MILITARY CHIEF, MARSHAL ZETTO.
I IMPLORE YOU, EXCELLENCY. POSTPONE YOUR TRIP TO TETRODE UNTIL A SAFER TIME ARRIVES.
NO! I WILL UNDERTAKE THIS GOODWILL TOUR AS PLANNED. BUT WITH THE HELP OF MARSHAL ZETTO, I'LL SEE THAT IT IS THE ZONDANS WHO GET A SURPRISE – NOT ME!
WE WILL ALLOW THE ZONDANS TO MAKE ME THEIR HOSTAGE. BUT IT WILL NOT BRING THEM POWER OVER THE UNIVERSE. YOUR ARMY WILL SEE TO THAT, MARSHAL ZETTO.
I'LL CALL THE CHIEFS OF STAFFS SO THAT WE CAN FINALISE OUR PLANS.
MEANWHILE, A ZONDAN FREIGHTER, PACKED WITH THE PRECIOUS METAL, TRIGONIUM, WAS OFF ON A SHOPPING EXPEDITION TO TETRODE – TO BUY THE VERY LATEST IN SPACE WARCRAFT.
TETRODE IS LESS THAN HALF-A-DAY'S FLIGHT. ONCE THERE, WE SHALL EASILY PASS AS EMISSARIES FROM ELEKTON.
AND WHEN THEY SEE THE TWENTY MILLION THULLARS OF TRIGONIUM WE BROUGHT TO PAY FOR THEIR NEW CRAFT, THE TETRODES AREN'T GOING TO BOTHER WITH QUESTIONS.
THE TWO ZONDANS HAD EVERY RIGHT TO FEEL SATISFIED.
WE HAVE CAPTURED TRIGAN CREW HERE TO BRING THE NEW CRAFT BACK TO ZONDA FOR US...AT GUN POINT. ONE FALSE MOVE, AND THEY AND WE PERISH.
A PRICE WE ARE PREPARED TO PAY. LET'S GO!
HOWEVER, WHAT THE ZONDANS DID NOT KNOW WAS THAT THE CREW OF THEIR CRAFT INCLUDED BRINKA, WHO HAD SMUGGLED HIMSELF ABOARD BEFORE LIFT-OFF.
ONE FALSE STEP, AND THAT'S THE END OF ME.

AT HIM, BOYS!
TAKE THAT, YOU THUG!
THEY THRUST THE UNCONSCIOUS GUARD INTO A STORES LOCKER.
HE'LL BE SAFE IN THERE. HERE'S WHAT WE'LL DO. FROM NOW ON, I'M YOUR GUARD. WE'LL PLAY ALONG WITH THE ZONDANS, FOR THE TIME BEING.
YOU MEAN, WE'RE GOING TO LET THEM HAND OVER ALL THAT TRIGONIUM IN RETURN FOR THE DEADLIEST WAR-CRAFT IN THE GALAXY?
COUNT ON US! WE'RE WITH YOU ALL THE WAY. BUT WHO ARE YOU?
I'M A LONE AGENT SENT BY TRIGO TO BEAT THE HIJACKERS.
YES! AND YOU'RE GOING TO CREW THE CRAFT. ONLY, INSTEAD OF FLYING IT TO ZONDA, WE'LL SET COURSE FOR ELEKTON - AND STAY ON IT.
A LONE AGENT NO LONGER. THERE'S FOUR OF US NOW, AND FOUR TRIGANS CAN BEAT AN ARMY OF ZONDANS.
THE SPACEPORT ON TETRODE WAS IN READINESS FOR THE NEW ARRIVALS.
THESE ARE THE EMISSARIES FROM TRIGAN CITY ARRIVING NOW. THEY WILL WANT TO INSPECT THE CRAFT WE HAVE BUILT FOR THEM.
IT IS READY FOR THEM TO FLY HOME.
GREETINGS FROM EMPEROR TRIGO TO THE PEOPLE OF TETRODE.
WELCOME. ONCE THE TRIGONIUM HAS BEEN UN-LOADED AND COUNTED YOU CAN TAKE OVER YOUR NEW WAR CRAFT. IT IS SO HEAVILY ARMED THAT WHOEVER OWNS THAT WILL BE A MIGHTY POWER IN THE GALAXY.
IN THE ZONDAN CRAFT, BRINKA AND THE TRIGAN CREW WERE PREPARING FOR ACTION.
WHEN YOU LEAVE THIS CRAFT, KEEP YOUR GUN OUT OF SIGHT. THE TETRODES MUST NEVER SUSPECT THAT WE ARE ZONDANS WITH A CAPTURED TRIGAN CREW.
YOU MAY LEAVE US, SIR. I'LL GUARD THEM WELL. I'M JUST AS INTERESTED AS YOU ARE IN SEEING THAT THIS NEW SHIP GETS INTO SPACE AND ON A COURSE FOR ITS RIGHTFUL DESTINATION.

WHEN THEY SAW THE NEW SPACECRAFT, BRINKA AND THE CAPTURED TRIGAN CREW STARED AT IT, SPELLBOUND.
PHEW! WHAT A BEAUTY! NO WONDER IT COST TWENTY MILLION THULLARS.
AN EXCELLENT VEHICLE. I HOPE IT FLIES AS WELL AS IT LOOKS.
YOU WILL FIND IT UNEQUALLED IN PERFORMANCE.
INSIDE THE CRAFT, THE CAPTAIN AND HIS CREW EXAMINED THE CONTROLS IN WONDERMENT.
IT'S GOT A NEUTRON SHIELD, PROTON GUNS, MAGNETRONIC DETECTORS, HEAT HOMING MISSILES...THE LOT.
THAT'S NOT ALL, CHIEF. THERE'S A COMPUTER COURSE-SETTER TO CONTROL THE AUTOMATIC PILOT. THE THING PRACTICALLY FLIES ITSELF.
WE HAVE CLEARANCE FOR LIFT OFF.
IGNITION PROCEDURE... COMMENCE!
FIRST STAGE FIRING.
SET A COURSE FOR ZONDA AND SWITCH TO COMPUTER CONTROL ANY-ONE WHO TIRES TO OVER-RIDE THE COMPUTER WILL BE SHOT.
YOU'D BE NATIONAL HEROES IF YOU COULD TAKE THIS CRAFT TO ELEKTON, WOULDN'T YOU? BUT TO DO THAT YOU'D HAVE TO OVERPOWER ME FIRST. AND AS I AM ARMED AND YOU ARE NOT, THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE.
NOT AS IMPOSSIBLE AS YOU'D THINK!
GNUNNG!

BRINKA AND THE ENGINEER POUNCED ON THE COLLAPSED ZONDAN.
HE'LL BE SAFE IN HERE. I'VE DISARMED HIM.
SURE! HE'S HELPLESS WITHOUT HIS GUN.
BUT THE ZONDAN WAS NOT ENTIRELY HELPLESS. HE HAD HIS RADIO, AND WHEN HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS...
CALLING THE ZONDAN HIGH COMMAND. TRIGANS HAVE GAINED CONTROL OF THE VESSEL FROM TETRODE. WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS.
ON ZONDA, THE OFFICIAL WHO RECEIVED THE MESSAGE BARKED OUT A REPLY.
ORDER YOUR CAPTORS TO RELEASE YOU AND SURRENDER THE CRAFT TO YOU. IF THEY REFUSE, TELL THEM WE SHALL ASSASSINATE THE EMPEROR TRIGO ON HIS GOODWILL MISSION TO MURIMO.
AS THESE WORDS WERE BEING SPOKEN, TRIGO WAS SETTING OFF ON A GOODWILL TOUR.
BRINKA HAS WARNED ME THAT THE ZONDAN'S HAVE THREATENED TO HIJACK THIS VESSEL. SHOULD THE HIJACK TAKE PLACE, THERE IS TO BE NO RESISTANCE. IS THAT UNDERSTOOD?
BUT EXCELLENCY...
I SHALL CARRY YOUR GOOD WISHES WITH ME TO OUR FRIENDS THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
AS TRIGO WAS SPEAKING, ANOTHER SPACECRAFT WAS STREAKING THROUGH THE UNIVERSE IN THE WAKE OF TRIGO'S VESSEL.
IT IS AGAINST MY WISHES THAT HIS EXCELLENCY'S LIFE SHOULD BE ENDANGERED.
THEN WHY...?
I HAVE MY REASONS, PERIC. SO DO NOT WORRY!
AM GAINING ON THE EMPEROR'S TRANSPORTER. SIGHTS AND WEAPONS PRIMED FOR ACTION. WHAT ARE OUR ORDERS? REPEAT! WHAT ARE OUR ORDERS? ANSWER – NOW!

AS TRIGO'S CRAFT WAS SPEEDING THROUGH SPACE, ANOTHER CRAFT WAS TRACKING IT AT A DISTANCE, KEEPING RADIO SILENCE.

WELL, WE'VE TAKEN UP OUR DESIGNATED STATION BEHIND THE ROYAL CRAFT. OUR ORDERS ARE TO FOLLOW THE EMPEROR'S CRAFT AT A SAFE AND DISCREET DISTANCE, KEEPING VISUAL CONTACT ONLY. THE LEADER OF THE COMMANDOS HAS SEALED ORDERS THAT HAVE TO BE OPENED IN THE EVENT OF ANY COURSE CHANGE.

WHAT'S ALL THIS ABOUT, CHIEF? I'VE BEEN ON MANY MISSIONS, BUT NEVER A MYSTERY TOUR WITH A SHIP FULL OF COMMANDOS.

JUST SIT TIGHT AND OBEY ORDERS.

AT THAT MOMENT, IN TRIGO'S ROYAL TRANSPORTER, WARNING LIGHTS WERE FLASHING ON THE PILOT'S CONSOLE.

THERE'S A LOT GOING WRONG, CHIEF! THERE'S A MALFUNCTION OF THE DEACTIVATOR. I'VE FOUND THE CAUSE. NUMBER TWO GENERATOR'S ON THE BLINK. SHALL I CUT ALL NONESSENTIAL POWER?

BETTER DO THAT. AND GIVE ME A READING ON THE FLIGHT BEAM. MY INSTRUMENTS HAVE GONE DEAD.

AS THE PILOT WRESTLED WITH HIS CONTROLS, A DREADFUL THOUGHT FLASHED INTO HIS BRAIN.

COULD IT BE SABOTAGE? IT HARDLY SEEMS POSSIBLE ON A ROYAL TRANSPORTER THAT'S BEEN CHECKED AND DOUBLE-CHECKED.

UNCANNILY, THE PILOT'S FEARS WERE CONFIRMED WHEN A STRANGE VOICE BOOMED THROUGH HIS HEADPHONE.

THIS IS ZONDA. WE HAVE AN AGENT ABOARD YOUR CRAFT. THERE WILL BE MORE SABOTAGE UNLESS YOU SET A COURSE FOR ZONDA – NOW!

AND IF WE REFUSE?

ALARMED BY THE LOSS OF POWER, TRIGO HAD GONE TO THE FLIGHT DECK IN TIME TO HEAR...
IF YOU REFUSE TO FLY TO ZONDA, YOUR CRAFT WILL BE BLOWN UP. THERE IS A PROTON EXTERMINATOR IN YOUR FUEL TANKS. A SIGNAL FROM ZONDA WILL SET OFF IN TEN SECONDS. ONE...TWO...THREE...!
IT SEEMS WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE, CAPTAIN. AGREE TO THEIR DEMANDS!
AND SO, THE CAPTAIN OF TRIGO'S CRAFT WAS FORCED TO SET COURSE FOR THE PRISON PLANET OF ZONDA. MEANWHILE, IN THE TRACKING CRAFT...
THE ROYAL CRAFT HAS CHANGED COURSE FOR ZONDA. TELL THE COMMANDO CAPTAIN TO OPEN OUR SEALED ORDERS.
AYE, AYE, SIR! LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO SEE SOME ACTION.
THE COMMANDO CAPTAIN RIPPED OPEN HIS SEALED ORDERS WITH NERVOUS FINGERS.
WE'RE TO LAND ON THE FAR SIDE OF ZONDA. THERE'S NO DETECTORS WORKING THERE, SO OUR ARRIVAL WILL BE A SECRET. THEN WE'RE TO AWAIT A SIGNAL FROM TRIGO. WHEN WE GET THIS WE'RE TO GO TO HIS AID.
WHAT SORT OF A SIGNAL?
TRIGO CARRIES A POCKET TRANSMITTER. THIS WILL SEND OUT A HOMING BEACON. WE CAN GO STRAIGHT TO HIM WITH THE HELP OF THIS.
STAND BY FOR ACTION. I'M ZEROING IN FOR A LANDING.
TAKE COVER! STAY ON THE ALERT FOR ACTION!
NOT KNOWING WHERE OR WHEN THEY WOULD NEXT BE REQUIRED, THE COMMANDOS SETTLED DOWN TO WAIT FOR THE CALL THAT WOULD BE THE PRELUDE TO THEIR GREATEST TASK... THE RESCUE OF EMPEROR TRIGO!

ANXIOUSLY, THE COMMANDOS AWAITED THEIR ORDERS.
THAT BRIGHT SPOT INDICATES THE EMPEROR'S POSITION. IT'S A SIGNAL FROM A TINY TRANSMITTER HIDDEN IN HIS CLOTHES. IT'LL BEGIN FLASHING WHEN HE WANTS US TO GO TO HIS AID. SOUND THE ALARM WHEN THAT HAPPENS, WITHOUT FAIL.
THE SIGNAL'S CHANGING POSITION. THEY MUST BE MOVING THE EMPEROR ALREADY, SIR!
ACTIVATE YOUR JET PACKS. BE READY FOR INSTANT TAKE-OFF!
MEANWHILE TRIGO, WHOSE CRAFT HAD BEEN FORCED TO LAND ON ZONDA, HAD BEEN TAKEN TO THE PLANET'S STRANGE RULER.
THE NEW WAR CRAFT WHICH FORMED PART OF MY PLANS TO RULE THE PLANETS IS BEING FLOWN TO ELEKTON BY YOUR ACCURSED TRIGAN AGENT AND HIS FRIENDS. YOU WILL SEND AN ORDER BY RADIO FOR THAT CRAFT TO FLY HERE TO ZONDA, OR YOU WILL DIE.
I REFUSE TO GIVE ANY SUCH ORDER!
A SHOUT OF RAGE CAME FROM WITHIN THE IDOL AND THE GUARDS GRABBED TRIGO ROUGHLY.
THEN YOU WILL DIE BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED POPULACE IN THE ANCIENT ARENA.
AND YOU, WHO REMAIN HIDDEN WITHIN THE IDOL, WILL YOU BE THERE TO SEE IT?
I SHALL BE THERE!
WITH A SNARL, A STRANGE APPARITION RUSHED FROM BEHIND THE IDOL.
SO YOU ARE THE TERROR OF THE ZONDANS!
FOR THIS HUMILIATION, THERE WILL BE NO REPRIEVE! TAKE HIM TO THE ARENA. THE EXECUTIONER HAS WAITED LONG ENOUGH.

TRIGO WAS BUNDLED INTO AN ARMOURED ATMOSPHERE CAR.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME?
TO THE CIRCUS ARENA. YOU MUST HAVE A SPECTACULAR DEATH, EMPEROR!
UNNOTICED BY THE GUARDS, TRIGO HAD SWITCHED ON A MINIATURE TRANSMITTER HE WORE ON A CHAIN AT HIS NECK.
THE CIRCUS ARENA? I SHALL HAVE THE GHOSTS OF THE ANCIENT GLADIATORS TO KEEP ME COMPANY.
A WARNING SIGNAL FROM TRIGO'S TRANSMITTER ALERTED THE COMMANDOS...
...WHO JETTED SKYWARD AT THE START OF A DRAMATIC RESCUE BID.
AT THE SAME TIME, CROWDS WERE ROARING AS TRIGO WAS BEING MARCHED TO THE EXECUTION PEDESTAL.
SEE OUR LASER GUN, TRIGO? IT WILL SEAR A HOLE IN YOUR HEART UNLESS YOU ORDER YOUR MEN TO SURRENDER THE NEW SPACE CRAFT TO US.
I WILL GIVE NO SUCH ORDER.
AS TRIGO WAS SPEAKING, THE SKY BECAME DARKENED BY MASSES OF FLYING COMMANDOS.
YOU'RE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES, CAPTAIN. I WAS JUST ABOUT TO BECOME LASER FODDER.
TAKE HOLD OF THE HARNESS, EXCELLENCY. WE'RE TAKING YOU TO THE COMMANDO PLANE.
TAKEN BY SURPRISE, THE ZONDANS WERE NO MATCH FOR THE CRACK COMMANDOS. WITHIN MINUTES, THE EMPEROR WAS ABOARD THE ROYAL TRANSPORTER AND ON HIS WAY BACK TO ELEKTON, ESCORTED BY THE COMMANDO CRAFT.
RADIO MESSAGE FROM ELEKTON, SIR. SPECIAL AGENT BRINKA AND THE CREW HAVE TOUCHED DOWN SAFELY WITH THE NEW SPACE CRAFT. HUGE CROWDS ARE GATHERING TO WELCOME YOU HOME, SIR.
NOW THAT THE 'RULER' OF ZONDA HAS BEEN EXPOSED, I'VE NO DOUBT THAT HIS PEOPLE WILL KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH HIM. FOR ME, HOME WILL SEEM A HAPPY AND SAFE PLACE AFTER MY RECENT ADVENTURES. IT IS THANKS TO YOU AND YOUR MEN, CAPTAIN, THAT I AM ALIVE TO ENJOY IT.
AND SO ENDED ANOTHER EXCITING CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE. A NEW STORY STARTS NEXT WEEK.

LXXIV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE TREACHERY OF MARSHAL HIPZON

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 860 - 865

8th July – 12th August 1978

Story by Ken Roscoe

Art by Gerry Wood

PERIC, ELEKTON'S GREATEST SCIENTIST WAS ENGAGED UPON A HIGHLY SECRET PROJECT WHEN...
WE'RE KEEPING UP TO SCHEDULE. I CAN SEE THIS CRAFT BEING AIRBORNE IN A DAY OR SO.
COME QUICKLY, SIR. SOMETHING TERRIBLE'S HAPPENED.
IN GREAT ALARM, PERIC RACED TO HIS LABORATORY.
THE PLANS OF THE INTERPLANETARY RACER, SIR... THEY'RE GONE. I LEFT AIR MARSHAL HIPZON EXAMINING THEM, SIR. SURELY HE COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN THEM?
IT DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY, BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT.
PERIC HURRIED TO A VIDEOVIEWER...
YOU PROVIDE A BODYGUARD FOR MARSHAL HIPZON, DON'T YOU? RADIO YOUR MAN. I WANT TO KNOW MARSHAL HIPZON'S WHEREABOUTS IMMEDIATELY.
I'LL GET ON TO IT RIGHT AWAY, SIR!
BUT MARSHAL HIPZON'S BODYGUARD WAS IN NO CONDITION TO TALK TO ANYONE.
BY ALL THE STARS! WHAT HIT ME? I REMEMBER NOW... HIPZON!
STILL DAZED FROM THE BLOW HIPZON HAD GIVEN HIM, THE BODYGUARD STAGGERED TO HIS FEET.
FULLY-FUELLED AND READY FOR TAKE-OFF. AND A BRIEFCASE FULL OF PLANS READY FOR THE HIGHEST BIDDER. I NEVER THOUGHT IT COULD BE SO EASY.
EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! CALLING POLICE HEADQUARTERS. HIPZON BOARDING ROCKET CRAFT AT THERICAN AIR BASE.
TRIGO WAS CONSULTING A TROUBLED PERIC WHEN THE DISTURBING NEWS ARRIVED.
THESE VITAL PLANS THAT WERE STOLEN... WHAT DO THEY SHOW?
THEY ARE THE PLANS FOR OUR NEW SINGLE-SEATER SPACE FIGHTER CRAFT, EXCELLENCY. SHOULD THEY FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS, IT WOULD BE A DISASTER.
AIR MARSHAL HIPZON HAS BEEN OBSERVED LEAVING THE PLANET, SIR!

THE NEWS COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN WORSE...
IT TIES UP, EXCELLENCY. HIPZON HAD ACCESS TO THE PLANS. HE COULD HAVE TAKEN THEM. BUT I WOULD NEVER HAVE BELIEVED HIM A TRAITOR.
WE WILL SUSPEND JUDGEMENT UNTIL HIS GUILT IS PROVED. MEANWHILE...
WE WILL CALL UPON COLONEL KRYP. AS CHIEF OF INTELLIGENCE, HE WILL PURSUE MARSHAL HIPZON FROM PLANET TO PLANET, EVEN TO THE FAR REACHES OF THE GALAXY, UNTIL THOSE PLANS ARE RECOVERED AND MARSHAL HIPZON IS BROUGHT TO TRIAL.
AT THE TIME, COLONEL KRYP WAS RELAXING AT THE SEASIDE RESORT OF ZOOTHA.
GREAT SPORT THIS.
AFTER THE 'BATTLE...'
RAPIERS MAY BE VERY WELL FOR SPORT. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO BATTLE MY CHOICE IS FOR THE MOST EFFICIENT WEAPONS SCIENCE CAN DEVISE.
THE SOUND OF A FAMILIAR VOICE MADE THEM LOOK UP.
I WAS GLAD TO HEAR YOU SAY THAT, COLONEL KRYP. IN THE MISSION YOU ARE ABOUT TO UNDERTAKE YOU WILL NEED ALL THE SKILLS OF SCIENCE, AND VERY MUCH MORE BESIDES.

IN A FEW CRISP WORDS, TRIGO TOLD COLONEL KRYP ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HIPZON AND THE PLANS. THEN HE ISSUED HIS ORDERS TO THE COLONEL.
I WANT YOU TO PURSUE HIPZON THROUGH SPACE UNTIL HE AND THOSE PLANS ARE SAFELY BACK IN TRIGAN CITY.
SPACE IS A BIG PLACE, EXCELLENCY. WHERE SHALL I START?
OUR TRACKING STATION PICKED UP HIPZON'S CRAFT. IT HAD SET A COURSE FOR RHODUM WHEN THEY LOST IT. YOU MAY PICK UP HIS TRAIL THERE.
AS SOON AS MY CRAFT IS READY, EXCELLENCY, I'LL BE AFTER HIM.
SO BEGAN THE MOST EXCITING ADVENTURE IN COLONEL KRYP'S CAREER.
FLIGHT Z849 CALLING RHODUM. REQUEST PERMISSION TO LAND AT TANZIN SPACEDROME.
WELCOME AS LONG AS YOU CAN COME DOWN WITHOUT A GLIDE PATH OR A HOMING BEACON. THERE'S A WAR ON AND WE ARE NOT FULLY FUNCTIONAL. BE SEEING YOU, IF YOU SURVIVE THE LANDING.
IT WAS NOT THE LACK OF TECHNICAL FACILITIES THAT MADE THE LANDING HAZARDOUS...
A FULL-SCALE WAR AND I'VE GOT TO LAND RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT!
AS KRYP LEFT HIS CRAFT, A RHODAN LANDED AT HIS FEET.
YOUR SPACE CRAFT? IS FOR SALE?
SORRY, NO! I'D BE STRANDED WITHOUT IT.

PITY! WITH THAT CRAFT, WE COULD DRIVE THE LIPZANS AWAY FROM OUR PLANET FOREVER.
HAS ANOTHER OF MY COUNTRYMEN OFFERED YOU PLANS FOR A CRAFT LIKE MINE?
A TRIGAN CAME. BUT WITH PLANS? HOW WOULD I KNOW? I BELONG TO THE WARRIOR CLASS. YOU WILL FIND THE UPPER ONES – THE ONES WITH BRAINS – IN THE HOUSE OF SCIENCE. ASK THEM!
KRYP WAS WALKING TOWARDS THE HOUSE OF SCIENCE WHEN...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO THE HOUSE OF SCIENCE, HOP ON MY BACK. I'LL GIVE YOU A RIDE. GIVE ME A REST FROM FIGHTING.
ALL RIGHT... THANK YOU. BUT TAKE IT EASY. I'VE NEVER RIDDEN A RHODAN BEFORE.
WITH A JERKY, SWOOPING FLIGHT, THE RHODAN AND ITS PASSENGER TOOK OFF.
WHAT TAKES YOU TO THE HOUSE OF SCIENCE? ARE YOU A SCIENTIST, SIR?
I'M ON A MISSION FROM TRIGAN, SEEKING A COLLEAGUE FROM MY PLANET.
THEY LANDED IN THE GROUNDS OF THE HOUSE OF SCIENCE.
WELCOME TO OUR PLANET, SIR. ONE OF YOUR COLLEAGUES HAS FORESTALLED YOU. IT'S NOT OFTEN WE HAVE TWO VISITORS FROM ELEKTON IN THE SAME DAY.
YOU MUST MEAN MARSHAL HIPZON. IS HE STILL HERE? MAY I SEE HIM?
OF COURSE YOU MAY SEE HIM. WON'T YOU PLEASE STEP THIS WAY?
KRYP DID SO AND...
AAAAAAHHH!

STAGGERING BACK IN ALARM, KRYP REACHED FOR HIS RAY GUN...
...BUT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY.
HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT. IT WAS ONLY A TRANQUILIZER DART. WE'D BETTER GET HIM BACK TO THE SURGERY.
HOW HE GOT INTO THAT ROOM I'LL NEVER KNOW.

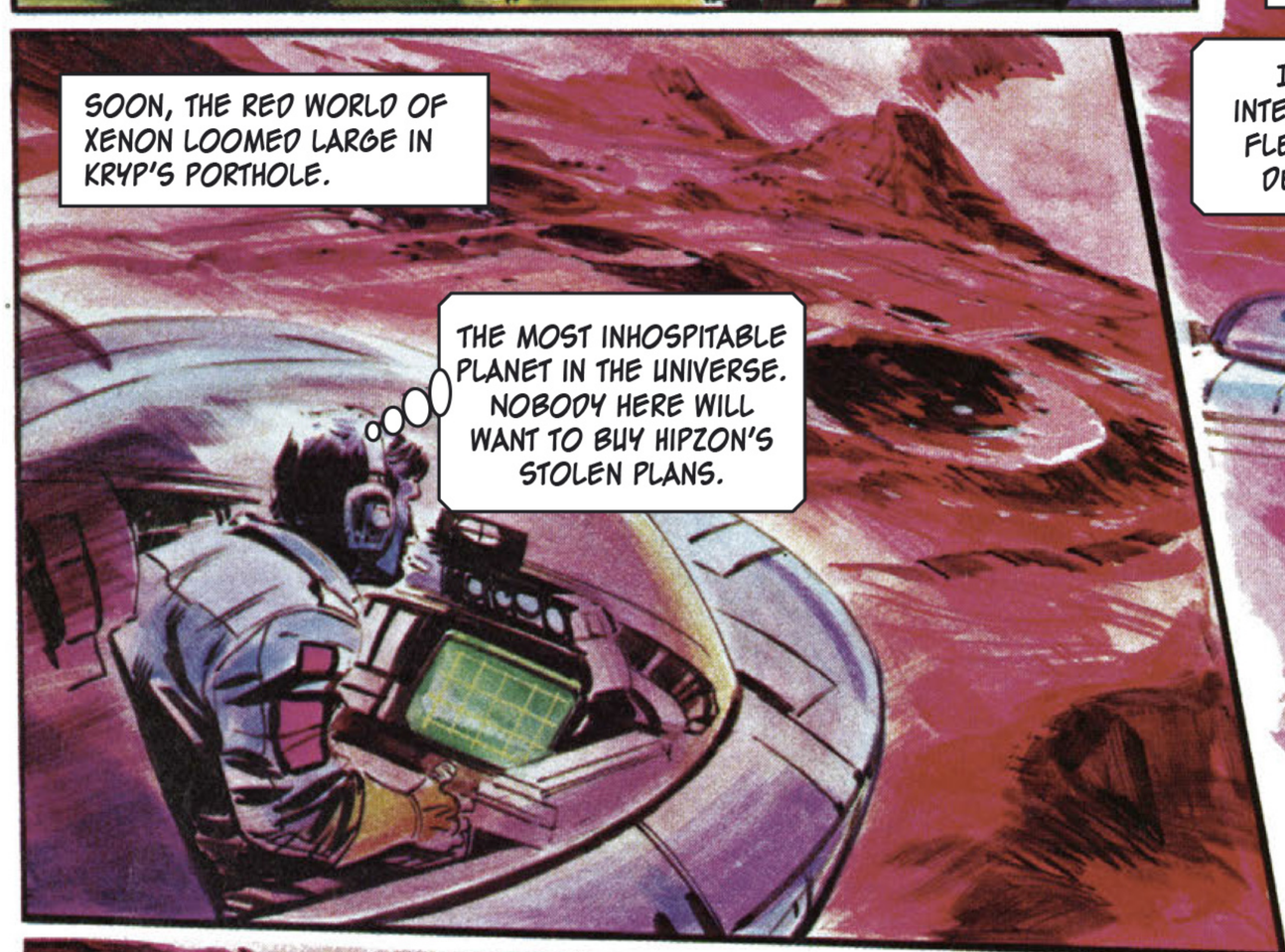
I APOLOGISE FOR THAT ATTACK. THE RHODAN WHO FLUNG HIMSELF AT YOU IS UNDER SOME STRAIN AT HE MOMENT.
STRAIN? I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HE IS DUE FOR A BRAIN TRANSPLANT AS ARE THESE FELLOWS HERE. WE ARE TRYING TO RAISE THE INTELLIGENCE OF THE PRIMITIVE RHODANS BY GIVING THEM NEW BRAINS. THESE HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO MAKE THEM PREFER PEACE TO WAR.

THEN ARE YOU NOT IN THE MARKET FOR A SUPER WARPLANE?
NO, WE ARE NOT! YOUR MARSHAL HIPZON CAME HERE WITH THE SAME IDEA.
WHERE'S HIPZON NOW?
IN THE COMPUTER LABORATORY WITH OUR CHIEF TECH-NICIAN. HURRY!

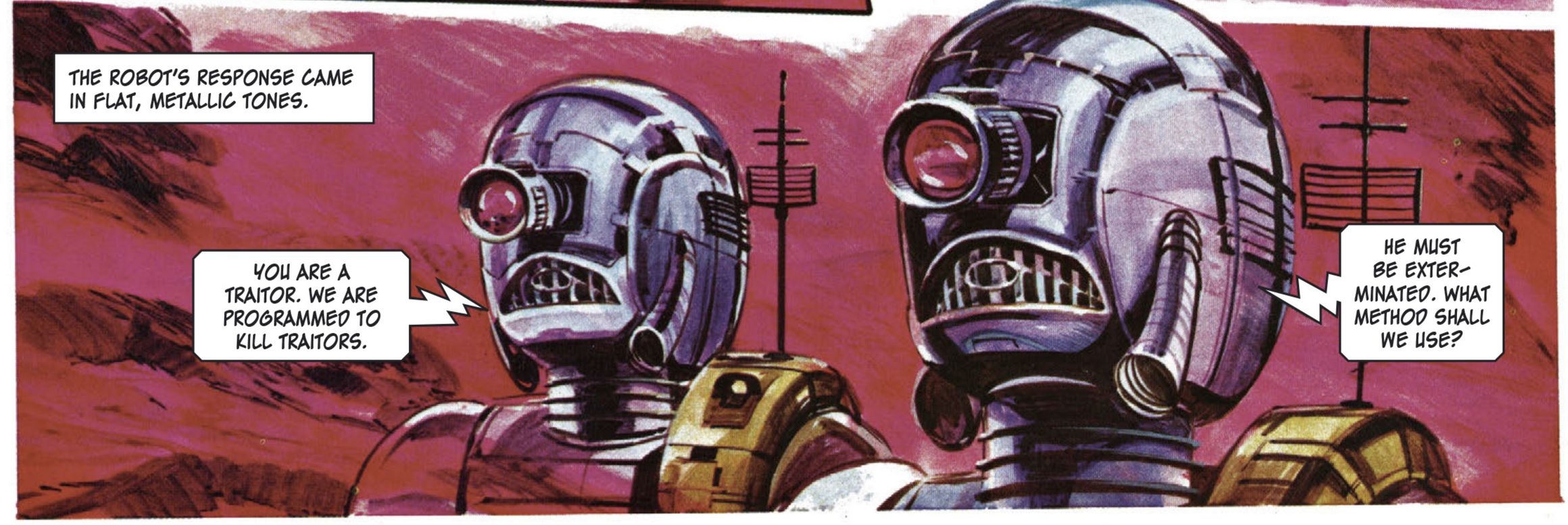
SORRY TO INTERRUPT, BUT I'M LOOKING FOR...
THE BRAIN IS ALMOST FULLY ACTIVATED.
BRING IN THE TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT.
AS KRYP WATCHED, A PATIENT WAS BROUGHT IN ON A TROLLEY.
THIS IS A CRUCIAL MOMENT, SIR. I MUST ASK YOU TO LEAVE. WE HAVE AN OPERATION TO PERFORM.
BUT MARSHAL HIPZON... HAVE YOU SEEN HIM?
ASK THE CHIEF TECHNICIAN.
THE TECHNICIAN DID NOT LOOK UP WHEN KRYP ENTERED HIS LABORATORY.
IS THAT YOU AGAIN, HIPZON? WE DON'T WANT YOUR WAR CRAFT, AS I TOLD YOU A MOMENT AGO.
GLAD TO HEAR IT. I'M AFTER HIPZON. THOSE PLANS HE OFFERED YOU ARE STOLEN.
HURRY AFTER HIM, THEN. HE'S PROBABLY AT THE SPACE PORT NOW.
KRYP RACED FOR THE SPACEPORT.
HIPZON'S ESCAPING... AND IN MY CRAFT!
WITH A ROAR, THE SPACECRAFT FOUGHT GRAVITY...
ALL RIGHT, MARSHAL HIPZON! YOU'VE STOLEN THE FASTEST CRAFT, BUT IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE I'M ON YOUR TRAIL AGAIN!

THE CRAFT IN WHICH MARSHAL HIPZON HAD TRAVELLED TO RHODUM WAS ON ITS PAD, READY FOR LIFT-OFF.
HIPZON'S STOLEN THE FASTEST CRAFT AND LEFT ME WITH THIS SLOWER SHIP. BUT I'LL GET HIM ALL THE SAME.

ONCE HIS CRAFT WAS SPACEBORNE, KRYP PICKED UP HIPZON ON HIS VIDEO TRACKER.
THERE HE IS - HEADING FOR XENON. AND THAT'S WHERE I'M GOING, TOO.

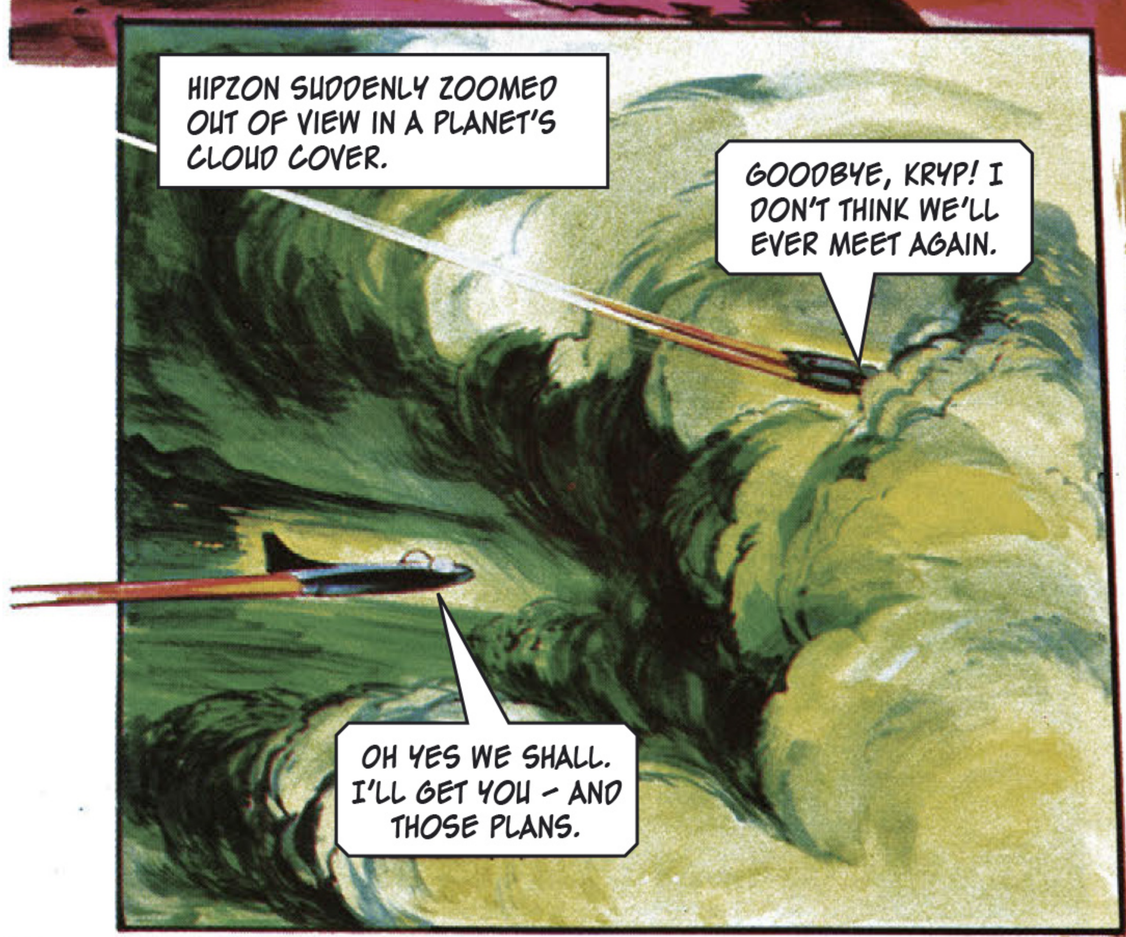

SOON, THE RED WORLD OF XENON LOOMED LARGE IN KRYP'S PORTHOLE.
THE MOST INHOSPITABLE PLANET IN THE UNIVERSE. NOBODY HERE WILL WANT TO BUY HIPZON'S STOLEN PLANS.

AT THAT MOMENT, HIPZON WAS ON XENON, SOUNDING OUT A POSSIBLE BUYER.
I HAVE THE PLANS FOR AN INTERPLANETARY RACER. BUILD A FLEET OF THESE AND YOU CAN DEFEAT ALL YOUR ENEMIES.

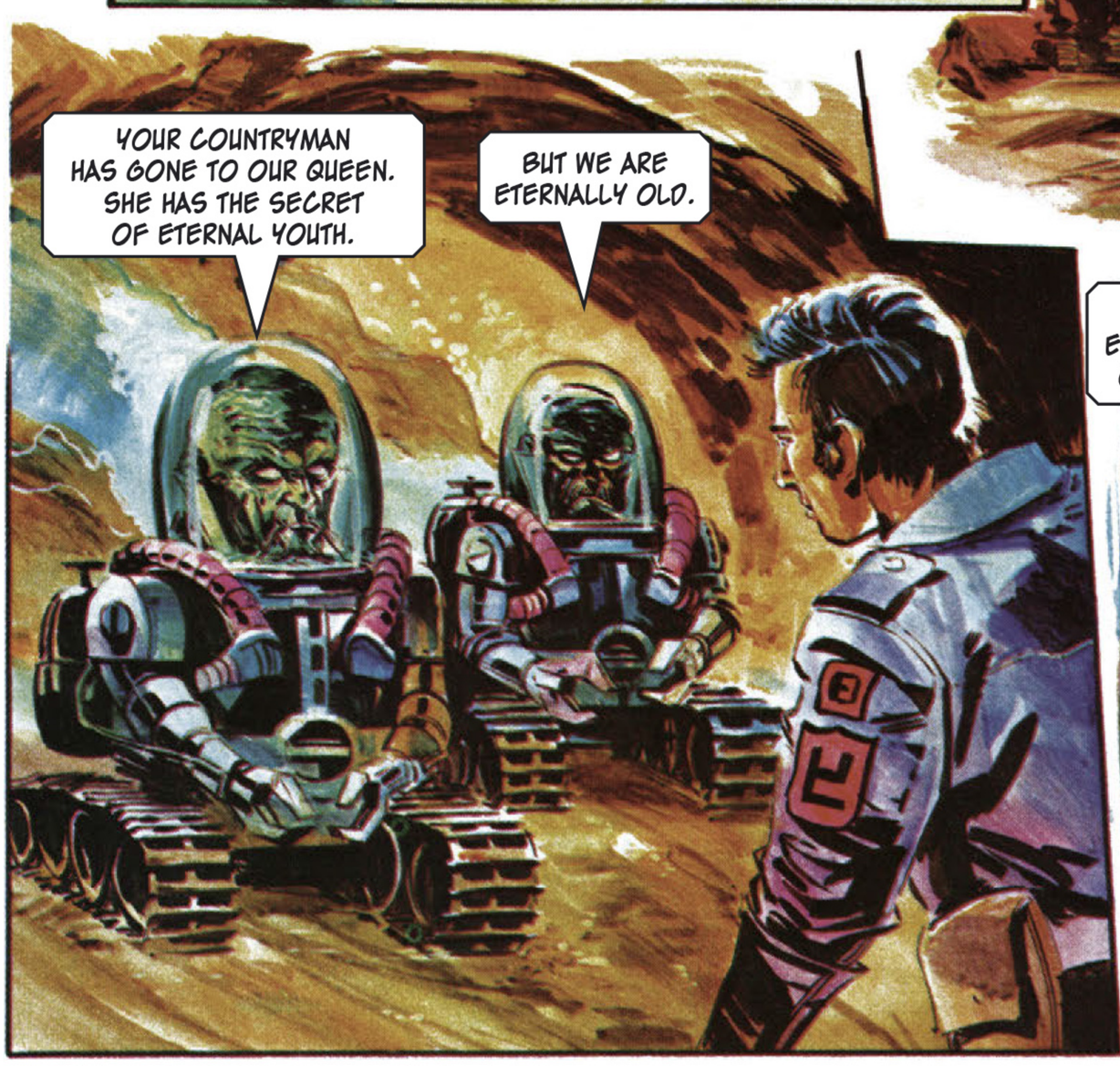

THE ROBOT'S RESPONSE CAME IN FLAT, METALLIC TONES.
YOU ARE A TRAITOR. WE ARE PROGRAMMED TO KILL TRAITORS.
HE MUST BE EXTER-MINATED. WHAT METHOD SHALL WE USE?

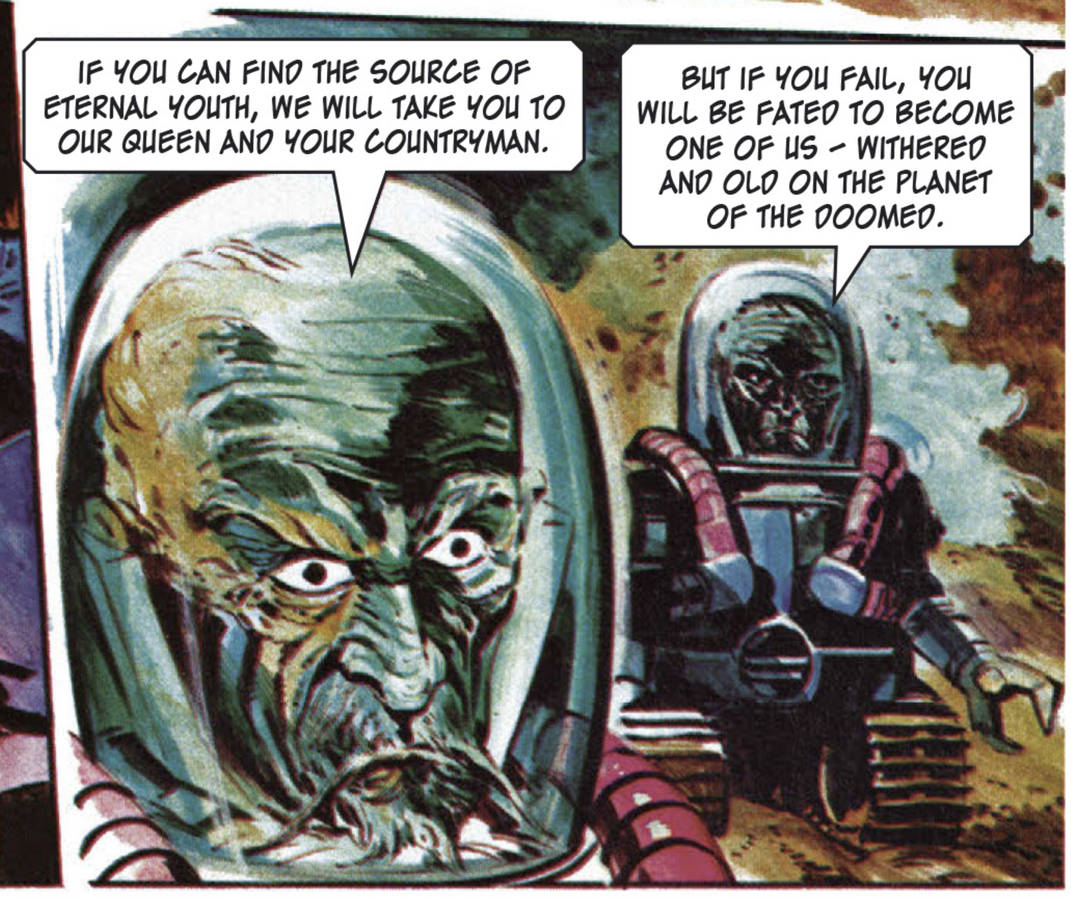
HIPZON DID NOT WAIT FOR THEM TO DECIDE. HE BEGAN LEAVING AS KRYP WAS ARRIVING.
STOP, HIPZON!
IF YOU WANT ME, YOU'LL HAVE A RACE ON YOUR HANDS.

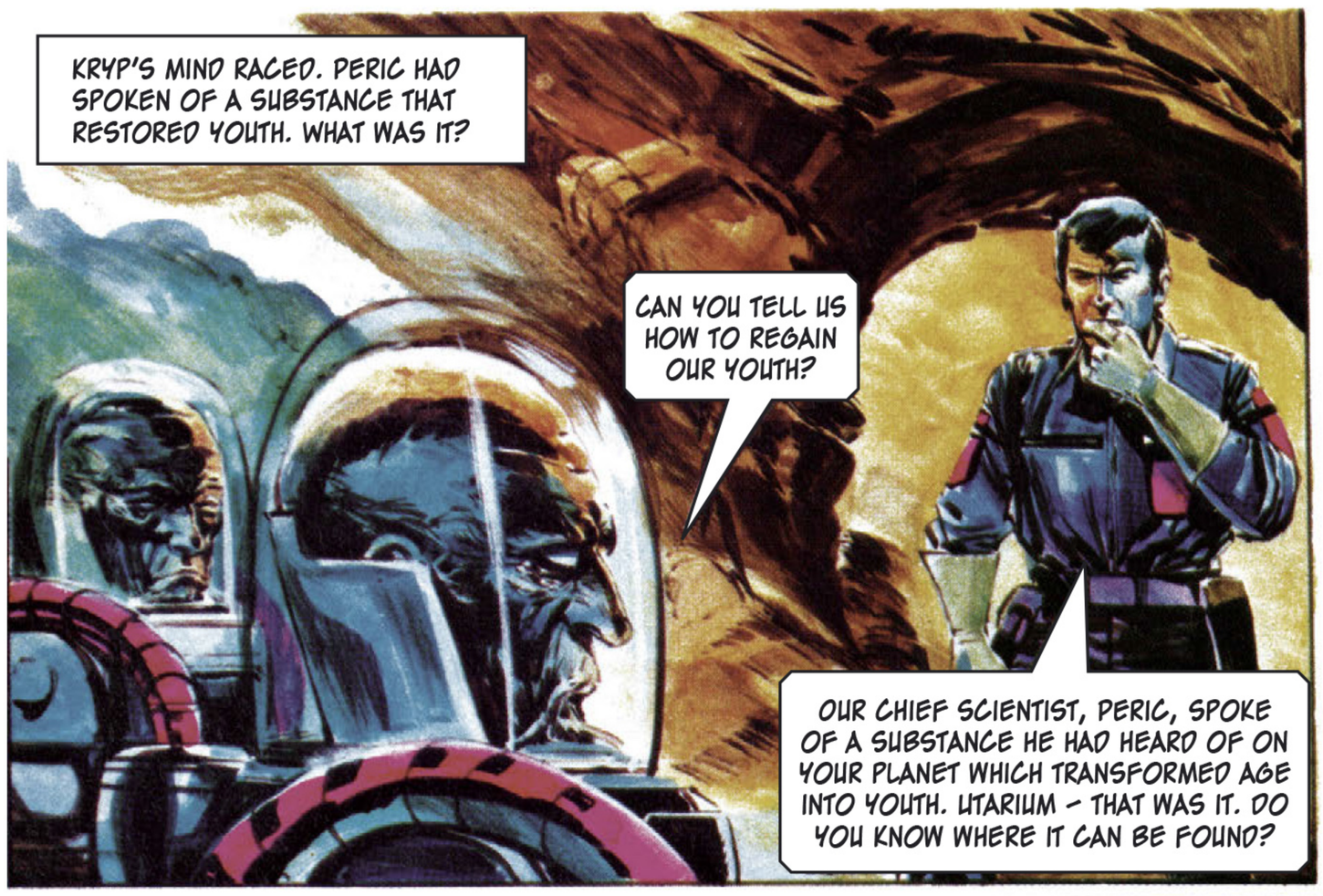
SOON SPACE WAS SIZZLING WITH THE MOST FANTASTIC CHASE OF THE CENTURY.
HOW ABOUT CHANGING COURSE FOR HOME, HIPZON?
THINK AGAIN! I KNOW THE PERFECT HIDEOUT. FOLLOW ME THERE IF YOU DARE.


HIPZON SUDDENLY ZOOMED OUT OF VIEW IN A PLANET'S CLOUD COVER.
GOODBYE, KRYP! I DON'T THINK WE'LL EVER MEET AGAIN.
OH YES WE SHALL. I'LL GET YOU – AND THOSE PLANS.

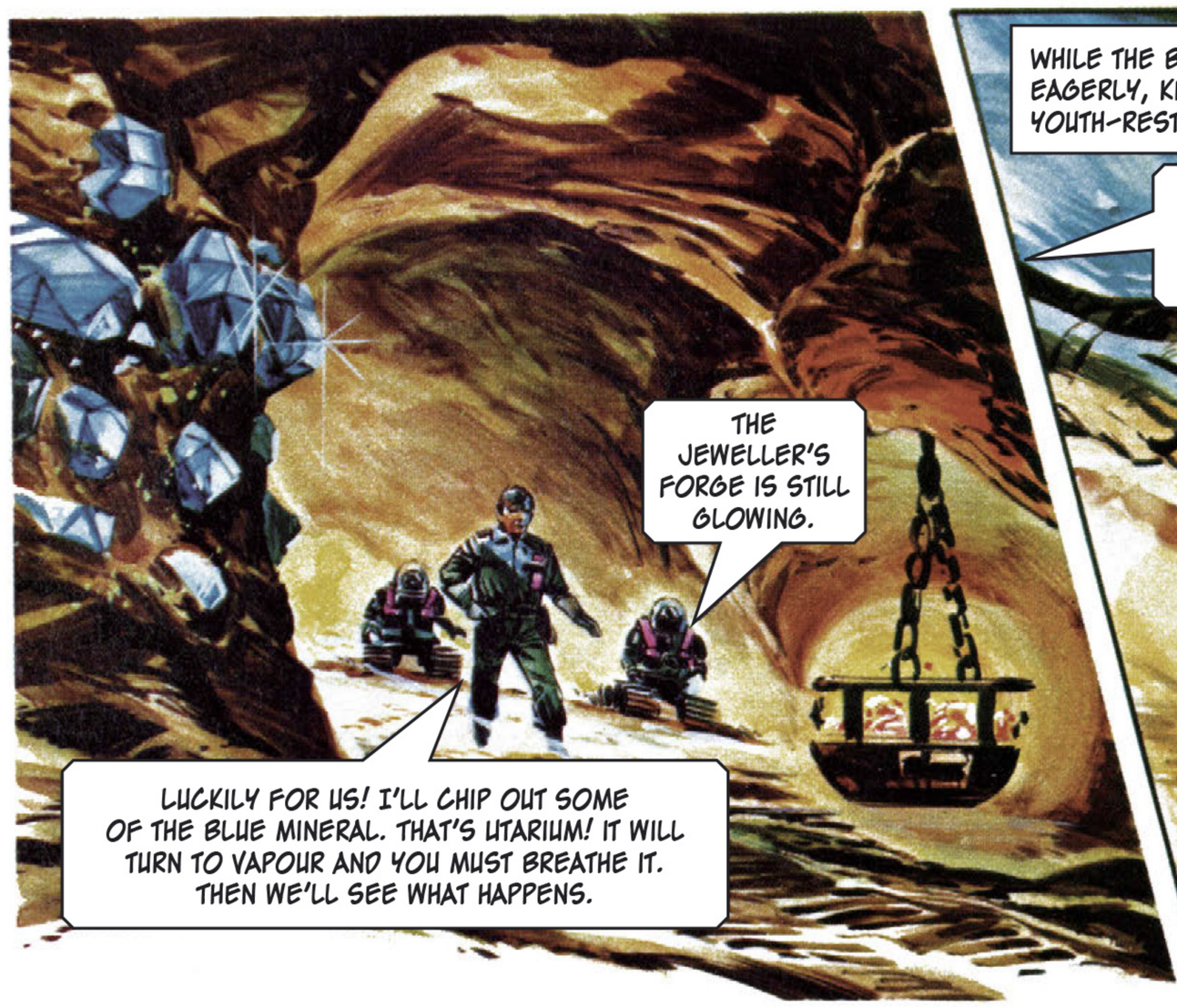
KRYP PLUNGED THROUGH THE CLOUDS ENVELOPING THE GALAXY'S STRANGEST PLANET, AVIOR, AND LANDED – IN A DEAD VOLCANO.
GREETINGS, BEINGS OF AVIOR. I COME IN PEACE. I AM SEEKING A COUNTRYMAN OF MINE.

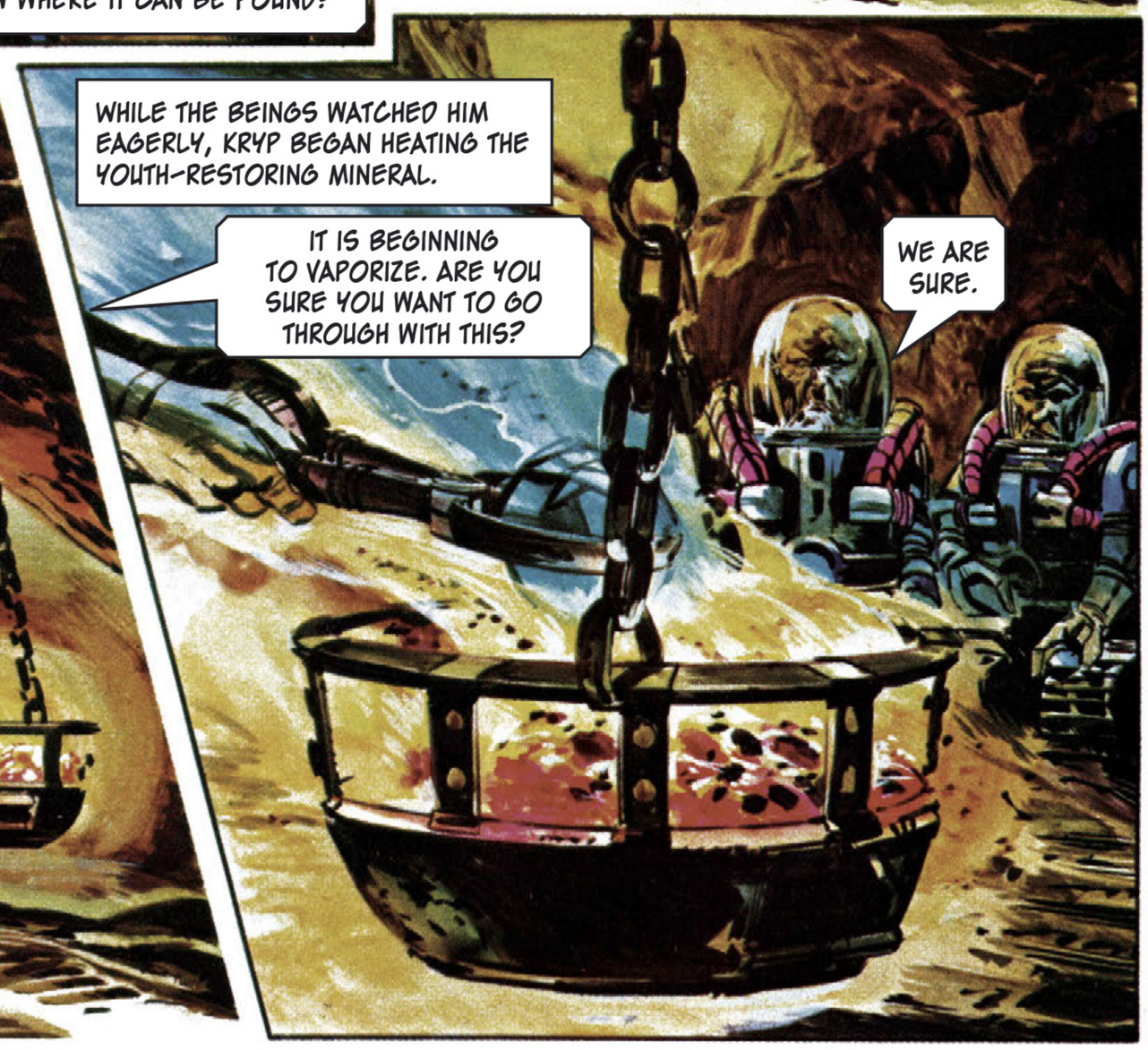

YOUR COUNTRYMAN HAS GONE TO OUR QUEEN. SHE HAS THE SECRET OF ETERNAL YOUTH.
BUT WE ARE ETERNALLY OLD.


IF YOU CAN FIND THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL YOUTH, WE WILL TAKE YOU TO OUR QUEEN AND YOUR COUNTRYMAN.
BUT IF YOU FAIL, YOU WILL BE FATED TO BECOME ONE OF US – WITHERED AND OLD ON THE PLANET OF THE DOOMED.


KRYP'S MIND RACED. PERIC HAD SPOKEN OF A SUBSTANCE THAT RESTORED YOUTH. WHAT WAS IT?
CAN YOU TELL US HOW TO REGAIN OUR YOUTH?
OUR CHIEF SCIENTIST, PERIC, SPOKE OF A SUBSTANCE HE HAD HEARD OF ON YOUR PLANET WHICH TRANSFORMED AGE INTO YOUTH. UTARIUM – THAT WAS IT. DO YOU KNOW WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND?

THERE ARE DEPOSITS IN THIS DIRECTION. HURRY!
RICH DEPOSITS. THE QUEEN'S JEWELLERY IS MADE OF IT.
YOU MUST HEAT IT AND INHALE THE VAPOUR.


THE JEWELLER'S FORGE IS STILL GLOWING.
LUCKILY FOR US! I'LL CHIP OUT SOME OF THE BLUE MINERAL. THAT'S UTARIUM! IT WILL TURN TO VAPOUR AND YOU MUST BREATHE IT. THEN WE'LL SEE WHAT HAPPENS.


WHILE THE BEINGS WATCHED HIM EAGERLY, KRYP BEGAN HEATING THE YOUTH-RESTORING MINERAL.
IT IS BEGINNING TO VAPORIZE. ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH THIS?
WE ARE SURE.

AS MORE VAPOUR AROSE FROM THE MINERAL, THE TWO BEINGS CREPT FORWARD.
BREATHE THE VAPOUR DEEPLY. LET IT SEEP RIGHT THROUGH YOUR LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS.
IT IS DOING SO ALREADY!
I AM BEING RENEWED!

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT WAS A REVELATION.
IT WORKED... IT REALLY WORKED!
AND NOW WE SHALL KEEP OUR PART OF THE BARGAIN. COME!
WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS NOW!
WE'LL CATCH THE TRIGAN TRAITOR FOR YOU. HURRY!
MEANWHILE, HIPZON WAS FINDING THE QUEEN AN EAGER CUSTOMER FOR HIS PLANS.
WITH THESE PLANS YOU CAN BUILD A FLEET OF CRAFT AND CONQUER THE GALAXY. SHALL WE FIX THE PRICE AT A MILLION THULLARS, YOUR MAJESTY?
NOT A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR UNIVERSAL DOMINATION! I AGREE!
AS THE QUEEN WAS SPEAKING, THE DOORS OF HER CHAMBER BURST OPEN AND...
THERE HE IS! THERE'S THE TRAITOR!
THERE'S NO ESCAPE THIS TIME, HIPZON.
AS THE THREE MEN FLUNG THEMSELVES FORWARD, HIPZON GRABBED HIS PLANS AND LEAPT...
I MUST FLY! SORRY I CAN'T STAY.
KRYP RAISED HIS PROTON GUN AND CLICKED ON THE ACTIVATOR.
BE WARNED HIPZON! UNLESS YOU START CLIMBING DOWN, I'M GOING TO SHOOT - TO KILL!

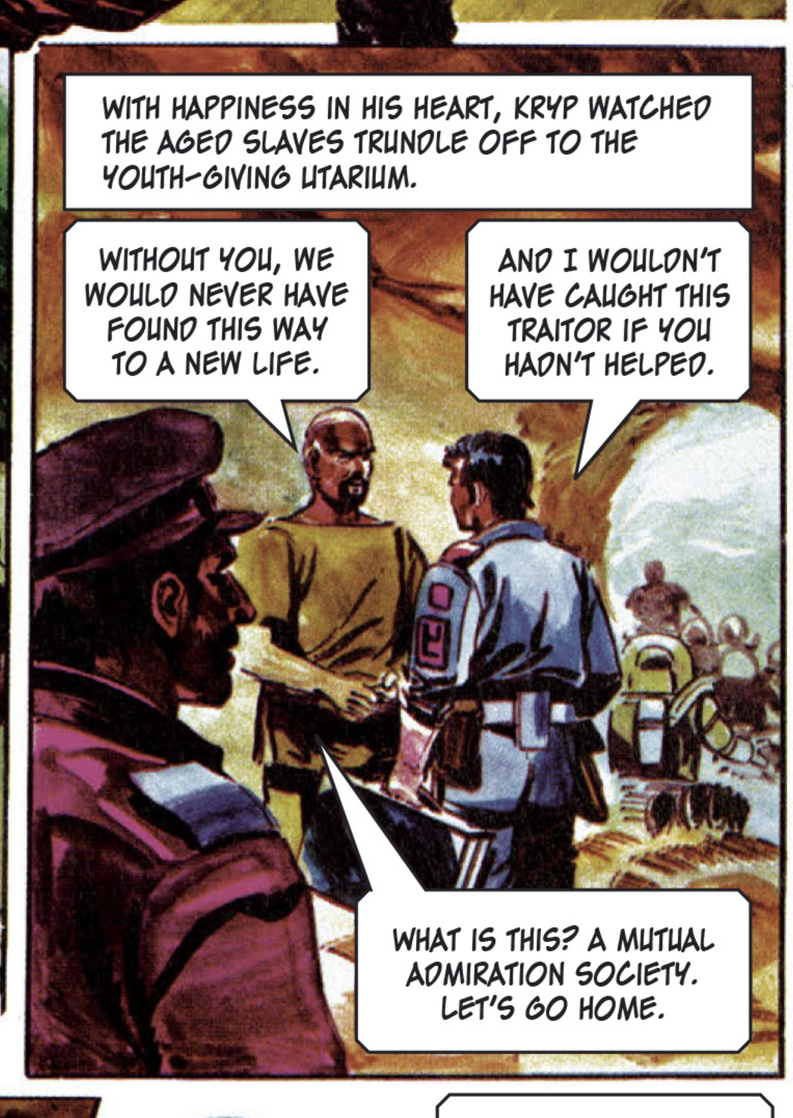
KRYP TOOK AIM, HIS TRIGGER FINGER TIGHTENING.
STOP. OR I'LL FIRE!
FIRE? NOT YOU! YOU WANT ME ALIVE.
AND THEN HIPZON LEAPT...
...AND LANDED WITH A FORCE THAT WINDED KRYP.
CATCH HIM!
KRYP AND THE TWO YOUNG MEN RACED AFTER THE DISAPPEARING HIPZON.
FELLOW SLAVES! RALLY AND STOP THAT TRAITOR FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
HELP US AND YOU CAN BE THE MASTERS OF YOUR OWN DESTINY!
AND WE WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO BE YOUNG AND FREE – LIKE US!
ELECTRIFIED BY THESE WORDS, THE SLAVES, THEIR TRACKS WHIRRING, RACED AFTER HIPZON.
SURRENDER, AND YOUR LIFE WILL BE SPARED!
YOU CAN NEVER ESCAPE FROM US!

HIPZON BEAT THE LITTLE OLD MEN TO THE EXIT AND THEN SKIDDED TO A HALT IN HORROR.
YOU HAVEN'T CAUGHT ME YET!

BUT HIPZON HAD NOT RECKONED ON COLONEL KRYP.
I'VE BEEN SAVING THIS FOR YOU, HIPZON.
GNUNGG!

BEFORE HIPZON COULD RECOVER, KRYP HAD DRAWN HIS PROTON GUN.
THESE PLANS ARE WHAT I CAME FOR. I AM TAKING THEM AND YOU BACK TO ELEKTON. BUT BEFORE I GO...

I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR HELPING ME TO CATCH THIS TRAITOR. YOUR REWARD WILL BE FREEDOM FROM THE BONDAGE OF PREMATURE OLD AGE. MY TWO YOUNG FRIENDS HERE WERE ONCE OLD LIKE YOU. GO WITH THEM AND FIND YOUTH AGAIN.


WITH HAPPINESS IN HIS HEART, KRYP WATCHED THE AGED SLAVES TRUNDLE OFF TO THE YOUTH-GIVING UTARIUM.
WITHOUT YOU, WE WOULD NEVER HAVE FOUND THIS WAY TO A NEW LIFE.
AND I WOULDN'T HAVE CAUGHT THIS TRAITOR IF YOU HADN'T HELPED.
WHAT IS THIS? A MUTUAL ADMIRATION SOCIETY. LET'S GO HOME.

WITH HIS GUN JABBED IN HIPZON'S SIDE, KRYP THRUST HIS CAPTIVE INTO HIS SPACESHIP.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, EH KRYP? THERE'LL BE A HERO'S WELCOME FOR YOU AT TRIGAN CITY. YOU'LL BE THE FOCUS OF ALL EYES.
YOU'LL HAVE A FAIR TRIAL. BUT I WOULDN'T BE IN YOUR SHOES FOR ALL THE UTARIUM ON AVIOR. I PREDICT THAT YOU'RE GOING TO PRISON FOR A VERY LONG TIME.
THEY'LL BE LOOKING AT YOU, NOT ME, HIPZON. THEY'LL BE SEEING A TRAITOR RETURNING TO THE PEOPLE HE BETRAYED.
ALTHOUGH KRYP WAS NOT MUCH GIVEN TO LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE, THIS WAS ONE TIME WHEN A PREDICTION OF HIS CAME TRUE...WITH A VENGEANCE.

LXXV

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

VOYAGE OF THE PERICI

Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** *878 - 883*

11th November – 16th December 1978

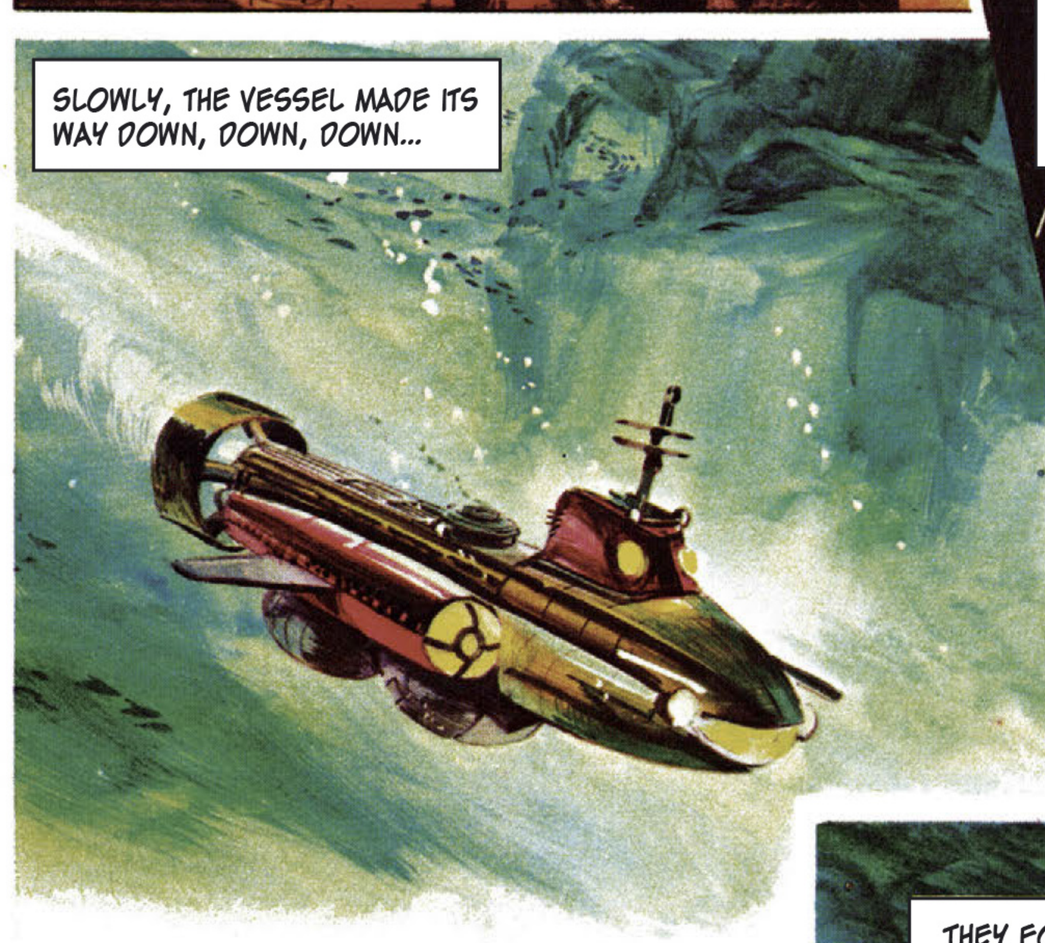
Story by Ken Roscoe

Art by Gerry Wood

IT SEEMED THAT THE WHOLE OF TRIGAN CITY HAD GATHERED AT THE HARBOUR TO SEE THE LAUNCHING OF A NEW UNDERWATER EXPLORATION CRAFT. FOR KRAG ULMA, THE CRAFT'S DESIGNER, IT WAS A PROUD MOMENT AS HE HEARD THE EMPEROR TRIGO PRAISE THE MAGNIFICENT VESSEL.
THIS CRAFT IS THE INSPIRED CREATION OF ONE OF OUR MOST TALENTED AQUANAUTS AND IT WILL BEAR THE NAME OF ANOTHER CITIZEN WHO HAS BEEN MY TRUSTED FRIENDS AND ADVISER FOR MANY YEARS. I NAME THIS VESSEL PERICI. MAY GOOD FORTUNE GO WITH ALL WHO VOYAGE IN HER.
THE EMPEROR'S WORDS WERE A CAUSE OF GREAT SATISFACTION TO BOTH PERIC AND KRAG ULMA WHO HAD BEEN ONE OF HIS MOST BRILLIANT PUPILS.
CONGRATULATIONS, KRAG. NOW WE MUST SET ABOUT USING THE CRAFT FOR THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT WAS INTENDED. WE KNOW LITTLE OF WHAT LIES BENEATH THE OCEANS OF ELEKTON.
I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO TAKE HER INTO THE DEPTHS.
PERIC SMILED AT THE ENTHUSIASM OF HIS YOUNG COMPANION.
AND, MY YOUNG FRIEND, I CAN HARDLY WAIT TO COME WITH YOU!
KRAG ULMA COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EARS.
YOU, PERIC? YOU WOULD GO WITH ME INTO THE UNCHARTED DEPTHS? SURELY THE EMPEROR WOULD NOT LET HIS MOST TRUSTED ADVISER UNDERTAKE SUCH A PERILOUS JOURNEY?
JUST LET HIM TRY AND STOP ME!
AFTER MUCH ARGUMENT AND DISCUSSION, AND MUCH AGAINST HIS WILL, TRIGO FINALLY AGREED TO LET PERIC ACCOMPANY KRAG ULMA ON THE UNDERWATER CRAFT'S MAIDEN VOYAGE.
GO THEN PERIC MY FRIEND. BUT IF ANY ILL BEFALLS YOU IT WILL BE A SAD DAY FOR THE EMPIRE – AND A BLACK ONE FOR KRAG ULMA!

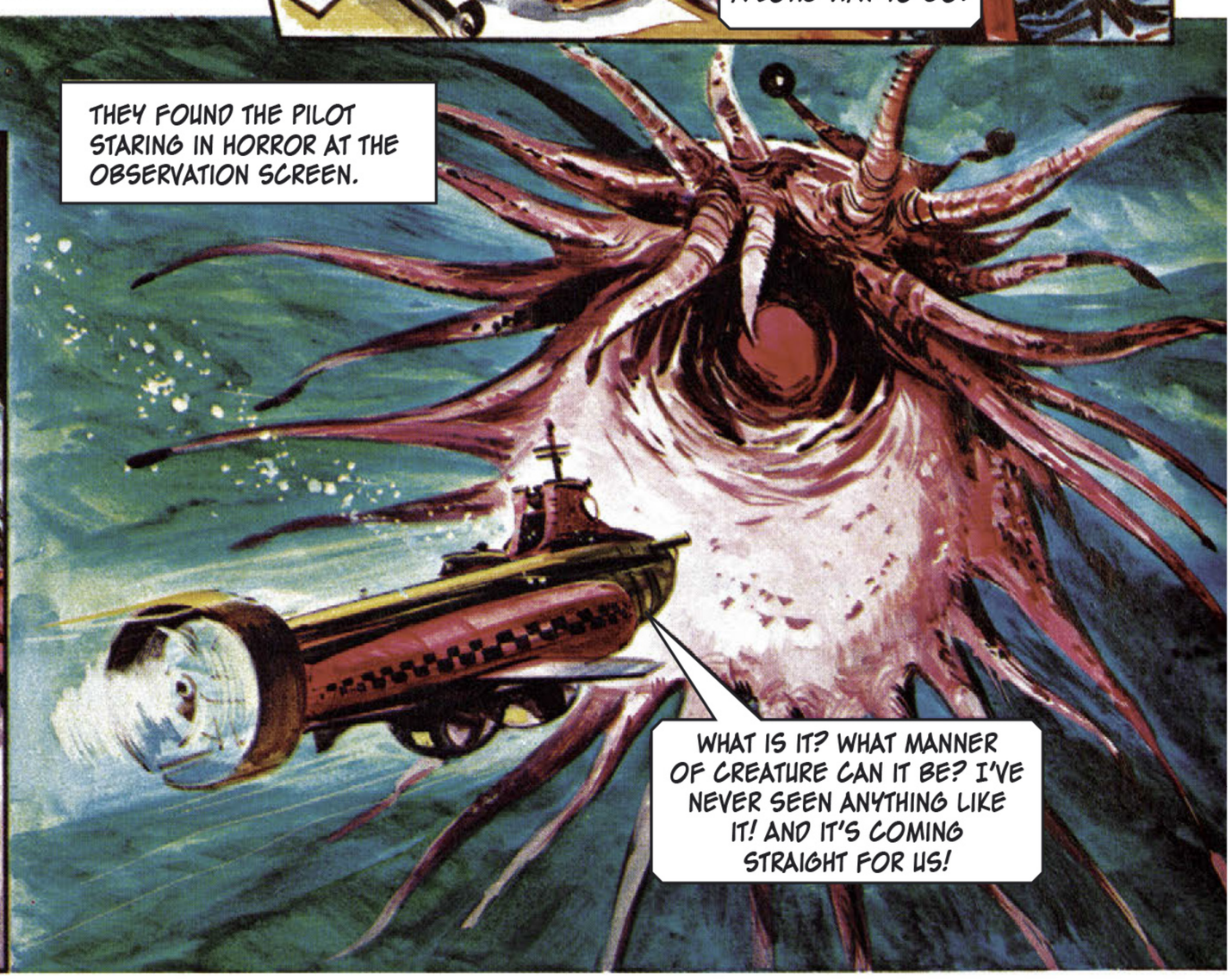
THE TIME FOR DEPARTURE WAS FIXED AND AFTER ALL PREPARATIONS HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND SPECIAL EQUIPMENT TAKEN ABOARD THE PERICI, THE GREAT DAY DAWNED. THE EMPEROR HIMSELF WAS AT THE HARBOUR TO SEE THE VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY BEGIN.
FAREWELL, MY FRIENDS. GOOD FORTUNE GO WITH YOU.

ABOARD THE PERICI, THE EXCITEMENT GREW AS THE CRAFT PREPARED TO DIVE.
CONTROL TO POWER ROOM. ALL SYSTEMS CHECKED. PREPARE TO SUBMERGE.
WELL, PERIC, NO TURNING BACK NOW!
WE ARE ON OUR WAY TO DEPTHS THAT NO TRIGAN HAS EVER REACHED BEFORE. WHAT WONDERFUL DISCOVERIES WILL WE MAKE?


SLOWLY, THE VESSEL MADE ITS WAY DOWN, DOWN, DOWN...

TIME PASSED UNEVENTFULLY UNTIL THE AFTERNOON OF THE SECOND DAY. KRAG WAS IN HIS CABIN STUDYING SOME ANCIENT CHARTS WITH PERIC.
WELL, SO FAR SO GOOD. YOUR CRAFT IS PROVING THAT IT CAN STAND UP TO THE IMMENSE PRESSURE.
I NEVER DOUBTED THAT IT COULD!
BUT WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO.

SUDDENLY A SHOUT OF ALARM CAME OVER THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM.
EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! FULL BRAKE POWER! REVERSE THRUST ALL ENGINES.
QUICKLY, PERIC! WE MUST GET TO THE CONTROL ROOM.


THEY FOUND THE PILOT STARING IN HORROR AT THE OBSERVATION SCREEN.
WHAT IS IT? WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE CAN IT BE? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT! AND IT'S COMING STRAIGHT FOR US!

THE CREW OF THE PERICI STARED IN HORROR AS THE HUGE JELLY-LIKE CREATURE ADVANCED TOWARDS THE CRAFT.
WHAT MANNER OF CREATURE IS IT? I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT IN ALL MY JOURNEYS INTO THE UNDERSEA WORLD.
YOU HAVE NEVER VENTURED TO THIS DEPTH BEFORE, CAPTAIN. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT STRANGE CREATURES WE MIGHT DISCOVER ON THIS VOYAGE.
SOON THE CREATURE HAD ENGULFED THE WHOLE CRAFT.
WE ARE HELD FAST, SIR! WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS?
KRAG ULMA BARKED AN ORDER INTO THE CONTROL SYSTEM.
POWER ROOM – ACTIVATE THE EXTERIOR HEAT SHIELD TO MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE.
I THINK OUR 'FRIEND' WILL SOON GET A NASTY SHOCK!
KRAG TURNED TO THE PUZZLED FIGURE OF PERIC.
I HAD INTENDED THAT THE OUTER SHIELD SHOULD ONLY BE USED TO FREE US FROM THE ICE FLOES OF THE ELEKTON WINTER, BUT NOW IT SEEMS IT CAN BE USED TO SAVE US FROM A FAR GREATER PERIL.

AT KRAG'S COMMAND THE ENGINEER HAD THROWN THE SWITCH TO ACTIVATE THE HEAT SHIELD AND ALMOST AT ONCE THE EXTERIOR SHELL OF THE PERICI BEGAN TO THROW OUT A TREMENDOUS HEAT.
AT FIRST THE HEAT SEEMED TO HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE CREATURE. ANXIOUSLY, THE CREW OF THE CRAFT PEERED AT THE OBSERVATION SCREEN.
YOUR DEVICE MAY BE DESIGNED TO MELT ELEKTON ICE BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE HAVING MUCH EFFECT ON THE CREATURE.
POWERHOUSE! INCREASE THE HEAT!
WE'RE AT MAXIMUM NOW, SIR.
THE MINUTES TICKED SLOWLY BY. THEN...
LOOK! IT'S BEGINNING TO TAKE EFFECT.
THEY STARED IN FASCINATION AS THE HEAT BEGAN TO MELT THE CREATURE.
WE'RE NEARLY FREE, SIR. SHALL I GIVE THE ORDER TO PROCEED?
AN EXCELLENT IDEA, CAPTAIN. I THINK WE'VE SHAKEN OFF THE CREATURE – BUT LET'S PUT AS MUCH SPACE AS WE CAN BETWEEN OURSELVES AND IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
PERHAPS WE CAN GET ON WITH OUR EXPLORATION WITHOUT FURTHER MISHAP!

ABOARD THE PERICI THE CREW WERE KEPT BUSY COLLECTING SPECIMENS OF ROCK FROM THE SEA BED AND SAMPLES OF MARINE LIFE.
HOW THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN WILL MARVEL AT OUR DISCOVERIES.
I'VE A FEELING WE WILL MAKE MANY MORE STRANGE FINDS BEFORE THIS VOYAGE IS ENDED.
I THINK I WILL GET TO WORK AND EXAMINE SOME OF OUR FINDS MORE CLOSELY.
THEN I WILL LEAVE YOU, MY FRIEND, AND SET ABOUT CHARTING OUR COURSE FOR TOMORROW. I WILL RETURN LATER AND SEE IF YOU HAVE MADE ANY STARTLING DISCOVERIES!
LEFT ALONE IN THE LABORATORY PERIC SET ABOUT HIS WORK. AMONG THE SPECIMENS TAKEN ON BOARD THAT DAY WAS A STRANGE PLANT-LIKE CREATURE. PERIC TOOK A SMALL SAMPLE OF IT AND PLACED IT UNDER THE MICROSCOPE.
NOW LET US SEE WHAT WE HAVE HERE.
THE 'PLANT' SEEMED TO GLOW WITH A STRANGE LIGHT. AFTER LOOKING AT IT FOR SOME MINUTES PERIC STOOD UP AND RUBBED HIS EYES. A WEIRD SENSATION BEGAN TO COME OVER HIM...
WHAT AILS ME? I CAN HARDLY MANAGE TO KEEP MY EYES OPEN...

PERIC STAGGERED FROM THE LABORATORY – THEN PITCHED HEADLONG ONTO THE FLOOR!
IT WAS SOMETIME LATER THAT KRAG ULMA RETURNED TO THE LABORATORY. HE FOUND PERIC IN A SENSELESS HEAP ON THE FLOOR OF THE CORRIDOR.
PERIC! WHAT HAPPENED! ARE YOU ILL? WAKE UP...WAKE UP!
BUT PERIC COULD NOT BE ROUSED.
KRAG SUMMONED HELP AND PERIC WAS TAKEN TO THE CRAFT'S MEDICAL CENTRE WHERE THE DOCTOR EXAMINED HIM.
WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH HIM, DOCTOR? HE WAS PERFECTLY WELL WHEN I LEFT HIM A FEW SHORT HOURS AGO.
I CANNOT TELL. I MUST MAKE SOME TESTS ON HIM TO DETERMINE THE EXACT NATURE OF HIS ILLNESS.
THEN I WILL LEAVE YOU, DOCTOR, AND RETURN TO THE LABORATORY. I MAY FIND SOME CLUES TO THIS MYSTERY THERE.
KRAG HURRIED BACK TO THE LABORATORY...
COULD THIS BE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE SPECIMENS THAT PERIC WAS STUDYING?
AS KRAG THREW OPEN THE DOOR A STRANGE AND TERRIFYING SIGHT MET HIS EYES...
AHHHHHHH!

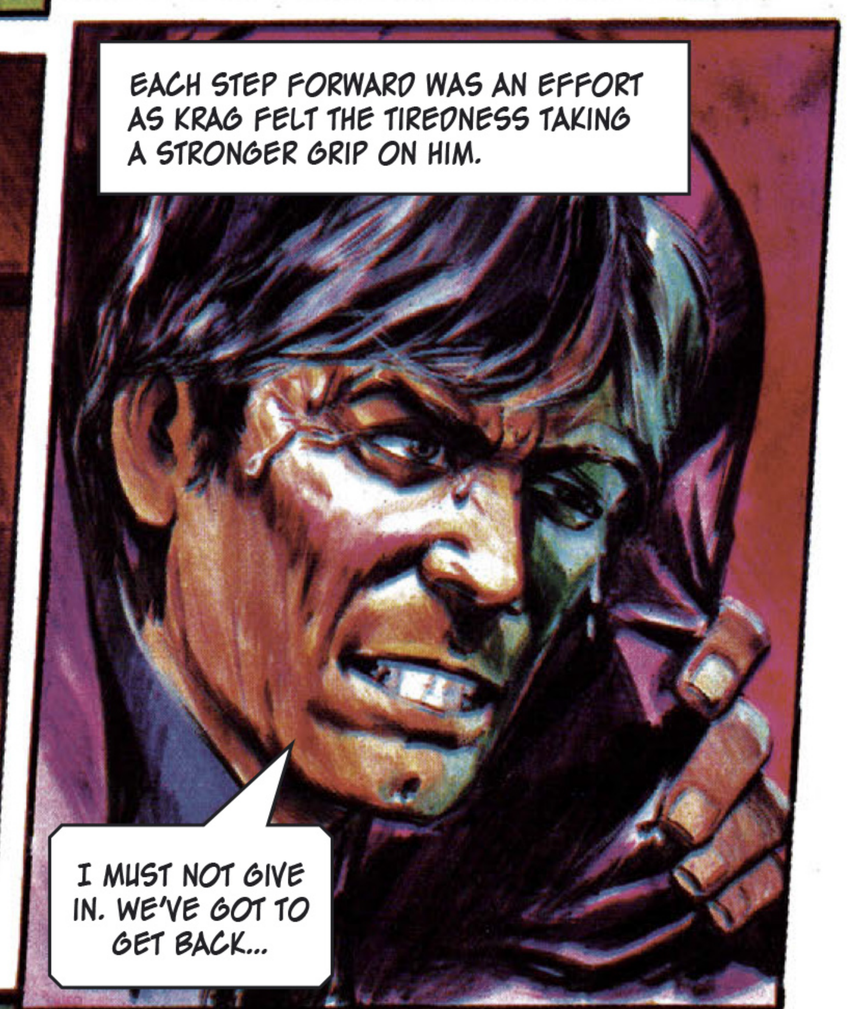
KRAG ULMA GASPED IN HORROR AT THE SIGHT THAT MET HIS EYES AS HE ENTERED THE LABORATORY...
AHHH! WHAT IS IT?
HE REELED FROM THE LABORATORY.
I MUST WARN THE REST OF THE CREW! THIS STRANGE CREATURE COULD SPREAD THROUGH THE REST OF THE SHIP UNLESS WE CAN STOP IT.
HE WAS SUDDENLY AWARE OF A STRANGE HEAVY FEELING IN THE AIR AND FELT A TIREDNESS COMING OVER HIM.
THIS FEELING, CAN IT BE THE SAME AFFLICTION THAT AFFECTED PERIC?
AS THE SOUND OF THE ALARM RANG THROUGH THE SHIP, WILLING HANDS HELPED KRAG TO SAFETY...
QUICKLY, SHUT OFF THIS SECTION OF THE SHIP. WE ARE ALL IN GREAT DANGER!
KRAG WAS HELPED INTO THE CONTROL ROOM WHERE HE WAS DELIGHTED TO SEE PERIC RECOVERED FROM HIS MYSTERY ILLNESS.
PERIC! YOU HAVE RECOVERED, OLD FRIEND. AND I THINK I HAVE DISCOVERED THE CAUSE OF YOUR SLEEPINESS.
QUICKLY KRAG TOLD PERIC AND THE CRAFT'S CAPTAIN OF WHAT HE HAD SEEN IN THE LABORATORY.
I HAVE ORDERED THE LABORATORY TO BE SEALED OFF. WE MUST CONTAIN THE CREATURE AND THE SLEEPING GAS IT GIVES OFF OR WE MAY ALL PERISH.
YES, WE ARE ALL IN GREAT DANGER. WE SHALL HAVE TO LET TRIGO KNOW OF THESE STRANGE HAPPENINGS.

A SHOUT FROM THE CREWMAN AT THE CONTROL CONSOL MADE THEM HURRY TO THE VIEWING SCREEN.
LOOK! THE 'THING' IS SEEPING OUT OF THE LABORATORY. IT'S GOING TOWARDS THE CREW'S QUARTERS!
QUICKLY, EVACUATE THE CREW'S QUARTERS. ONLY THE ENGINE ROOM CREW MUST REMAIN AT THEIR POST.
AS THE CREWMAN STARTED TO COLLECT HIS BELONGINGS TOGETHER, THE STRANGE FEELING THAT HAD AFFECTED KRAG AND PERIC BEGAN TO AFFECT HIM TOO...
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? I CAN HARDLY KEEP MY EYES OPEN.
THE CREW LOST NO TIME IN OBEYING KRAG'S ORDER... EXCEPT ONE!
HURRY, WE DON'T WANT TO GET TRAPPED!
WHAT'S THE RUSH? WE'VE GOT TIME TO GET OUR THINGS TOGETHER.
WELL YOU CAN - I'M NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES!
BEHIND HIM, THE STRANGE CREATURE BEGAN TO SEEP INTO THE CABIN...
IN THE CONTROL ROOM, KRAG, PERIC AND THE REST OF THE CREW GATHERED THERE LOOKED ON IN HORROR AS THE STRANGE CREATURE FROM BENEATH THE OCEAN MADE ITS WAY TOWARDS THE UNSUSPECTING, AND BY NOW, SLEEPY CREWMAN.
KRAG DID NOT HESITATE...
COME BACK YOU YOUNG FOOL! YOU CANNOT HOPE TO RESCUE HIM AND YOU WILL SURELY PERISH AS WELL!
WHAT CAN WE DO? HE WILL PERISH IF WE DO NOT GO TO HIS AID!

KRAG ULMA RACED TOWARDS THE CREW'S QUARTERS. BY NOW, THE MYSTERIOUS PLANT FILLED THE WHOLE OF THE CORRIDOR LEADING FROM THE LABORATORY.

REACHING THE CREW'S QUARTERS KRAG ULMA WAS MET BY THE CREWMAN WHO STAGGERED TOWARDS HIM.
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME? I CAN'T SHAKE OFF THIS TERRIBLE FEELING OF TIREDNESS.
IT'S THAT PLANT. IT GIVES OFF A STRANGE GAS WHICH PUTS YOU TO SLEEP. HURRY, WE MUST GET OUT OF HERE OR WE WILL BOTH PERISH.

ALREADY KRAG COULD FEEL THE TIREDNESS BEGINNING TO OVERCOME HIM. GATHERING ALL HIS STRENGTH, HE HOISTED THE BEWILDERED CREWMAN OVER HIS SHOULDER AND BEGAN RETRACING HIS STEPS TOWARDS THE CONTROL ROOM.

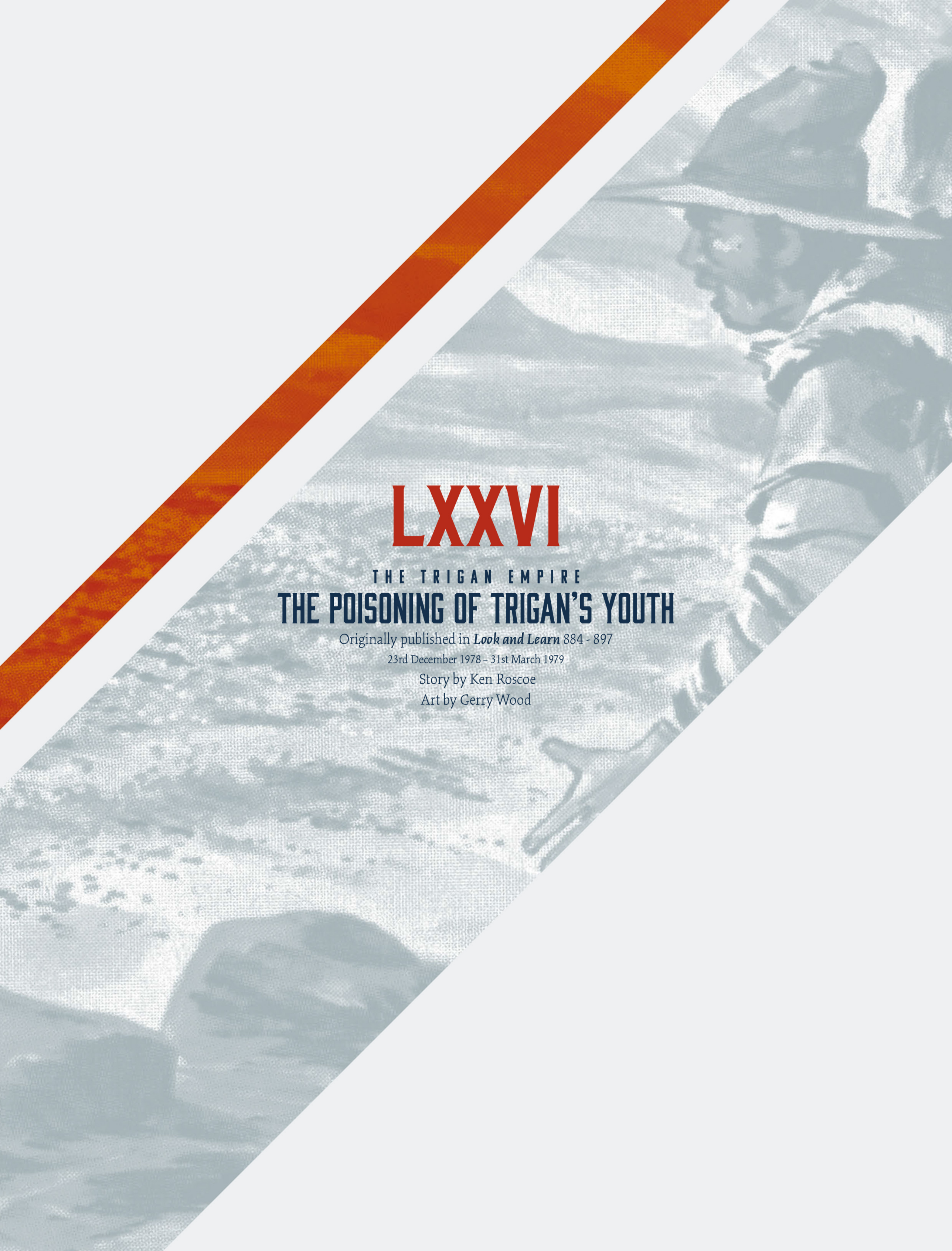

EACH STEP FORWARD WAS AN EFFORT AS KRAG FELT THE TIREDNESS TAKING A STRONGER GRIP ON HIM.
I MUST NOT GIVE IN. WE'VE GOT TO GET BACK...

THEN, WHEN ALL HIS STRENGTH SEEMED ABOUT TO LEAVE HIM, HE FELT THE GRIP OF STRONG HANDS ON HIS ARMS AND HE WAS DRAGGED INTO THE CONTROL ROOM. THE HEAVY DOOR CLANGED SHUT BEHIND HIM.
YOU YOUNG FOOL! YOU COULD HAVE LOST YOUR LIFE.
WELL I DIDN'T. BUT BY THE WAY THAT ACCURSED THING IS SPREADING WE WILL ALL PERISH IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING.

I HAVE MADE CONTACT WITH THE EMPEROR. HE IS SENDING A RESCUE CRAFT TO STAND BY ON THE SURFACE. I FEAR WE WILL HAVE TO ABANDON THE EXPEDITION.
I THINK WE SHOULD MAKE OUR WAY TO THE SURFACE WITH ALL SPEED, WHILST WE STILL HAVE OUR SENSES. IF WE ALL BECOME AFFECTED BY THE TIREDNESS WE WILL LOSE ALL CONTROL OF THE CRAFT AND THEN WE WILL SURELY PERISH.
KRAG SAW THAT PERIC'S PLAN WAS THEIR ONLY COURSE OF ACTION, AND SO...
CAPTAIN, CONTACT THE POWER ROOM. WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE SURFACE. AND TELL THEM TO MAKE IT AS FAST AS THEY CAN!
LET US HOPE THE RESCUE CRAFT WILL BE WAITING FOR US.
THE CAPTAIN GAVE HIS ORDER TO THE POWER ROOM AND ALMOST AT ONCE THEY FELT THE CRAFT BEGIN TO RISE.
BUT AS WELL AS THE MOVEMENT OF THE CRAFT, PERIC FELT SOMETHING ELSE...
KRAG! THE TIREDNESS, I CAN FEEL IT IN THE AIR...
YOU'RE RIGHT! I CAN FEEL IT, TOO. BUT HOW...
LOOK! THE VENTILATION SHAFT! THAT THING HAS GOT INTO THE VENTILATION SYSTEM. IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE ARE OVERCOME BY ITS ACCURSED EFFECT. WE'RE DONE FOR!

KRAG ULMA AND PERIC STARED IN HORROR AS THE STRANGE UNDERWATER PLANT CREPT IN THROUGH THE VENTILATION SHAFT AND INTO THE CONTROL ROOM.
WE'RE DONE FOR, PERIC. WE WILL SOON FALL UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THAT ACCURSED 'THING'.
OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO REACH THE SURFACE BEFORE WE LOSE CONTROL OF THE CRAFT.
ON THE SURFACE ABOVE THEM THE RESCUE CRAFT WAS SPEEDING TOWARDS THE POINT OF RENDEZVOUS. JANNO, THE EMPEROR'S NEPHEW, WAS IN CHARGE OF THE SHIP.
WHAT IS OUR POSITION, NAVIGATOR?
WE SHOULD ARRIVE AT THE POINT OF... LOOK! THERE SHE IS!
IN THE DISTANCE THEY SAW THE PERICI BREAK THE SURFACE OF THE SEA.
MAKE HASTE. WHO KNOWS WHAT WE SHALL FIND WHEN WE REACH THEM?
AS THEY DREW ALONGSIDE THE UNDERWATER CRAFT, THEY COULD DETECT NO SIGNS OF LIFE.
QUICKLY, FOLLOW ME. WE MUST OPEN UP THE CRAFT AT ONCE.
PERIC'S MESSAGE TO THE EMPEROR HAD WARNED OF THE EFFECT THAT THE STRANGE PLANT HAD HAD ON THE UNDERWATER VESSEL'S CREW AND SO JANNO AND THE OTHER RESCUERS HAD DONNED PROTECTIVE BREATHING EQUIPMENT. RELEASING THE HATCH COVERS THEY ENTERED THE VESSEL...

THE RESCUERS MADE THEIR WAY INTO THE CONTROL ROOM WHERE THEY FOUND KRAG AND PERIC, AND THE CREW SLUMPED ON THE FLOOR. THE STRANGE UNDERWATER PLANT WAS RAPIDLY SPREADING ACROSS THE FLOOR.
HURRY, WE MUST GET THEM OUT OF HERE!
THE POWER ROOM... THE OTHERS... THEY'RE IN THE POWER ROOM...
SWIFTLY THE CREW OF THE STRICKEN CRAFT WERE TAKEN ABOARD THE RESCUE CRAFT.
ONCE THEY WERE ALL SAFELY ABOARD, JANNO GAVE THE ORDER TO DRAW AWAY FROM THE PERICI. KRAG AND THE OTHERS HAD BEGUN TO SHAKE OFF THE EFFECTS OF THE PLANT'S SLEEP-INDUCING AROMA...
JANNO... ARE WE SAFE? THAT ACCURSED PLANT - IT MUST BE DESTROYED. SHOULD IT REACH THE SHORE IT WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN THEN...
DON'T WORRY, MY FRIEND. I HAVE ONLY TO GIVE THE ORDER AND A MISSILE WILL BE DESPATCHED THAT WILL SEND THE PERICI, AND EVERYTHING IN IT, TO THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.
FROM THE CABIN WINDOW THEY COULD SEE THE PLANT FROM BENEATH THE SEA SPREADING ACROSS THE DECKS OF THE PERICI.
THEN HURRY UP AND GIVE THE ORDER. THE SOONER WE SEND THAT 'THING' BACK TO WHERE IT BELONGS, THE BETTER!
PREPARE TO LAUNCH MISSILE... 3...2...1...FIRE!
THE DEADLY MISSILE CLEAVED ITS WAY THROUGH THE WATER. THEN...
WELL, THAT IS THE END OF MY DREAM OF UNCOVERING THE SECRETS BENEATH THE SEAS OF ELEKTON - FOR THE TIME BEING!
I FEAR I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PERSUADE THE EMPEROR TO LET ME GO WITH YOU NEXT TIME YOU SET OUT ON SUCH A MISSION! PERHAPS OUR YOUNG FRIEND JANNO WOULD LIKE TO GO WITH YOU?
THANKS FOR THE SUGGESTION, PERIC, BUT I PREFER TO KEEP MY HEAD ABOVE WATER!



LXXVI

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

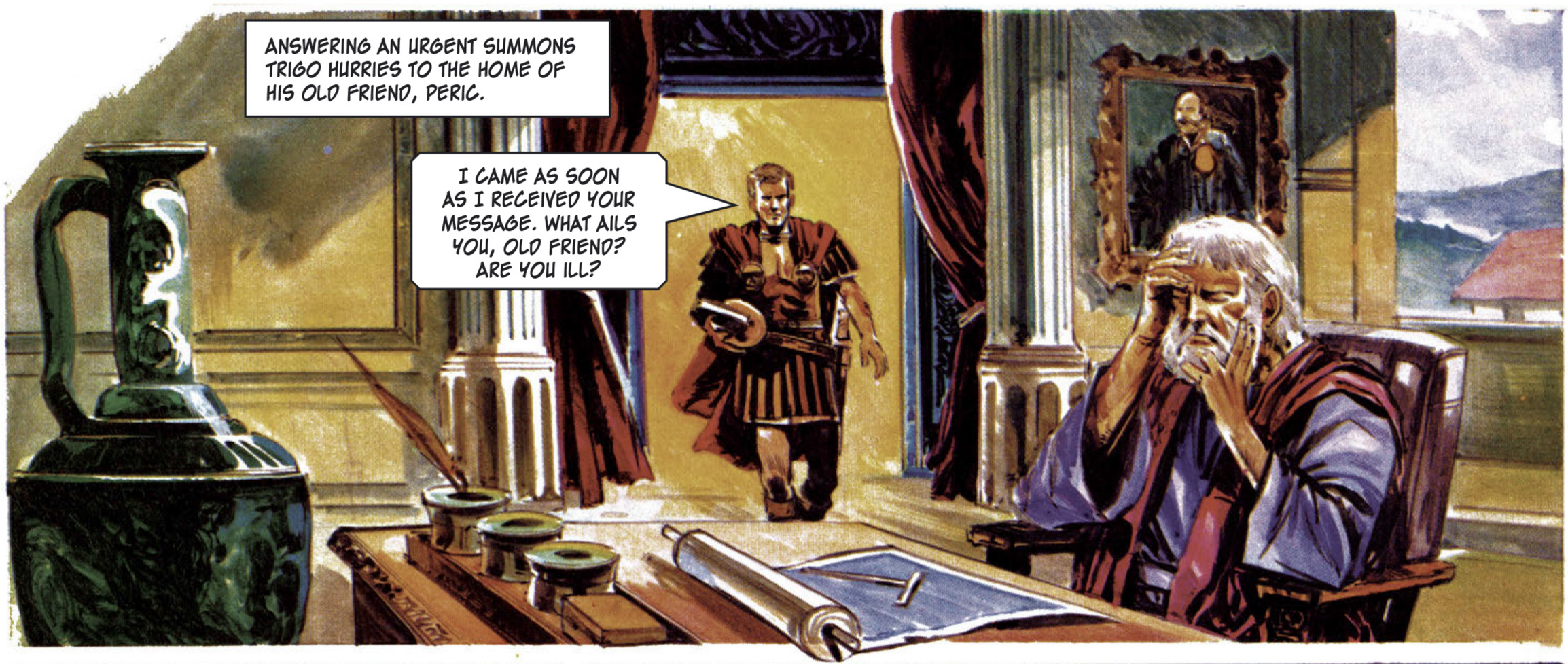
THE POISONING OF TRIGAN'S YOUTH

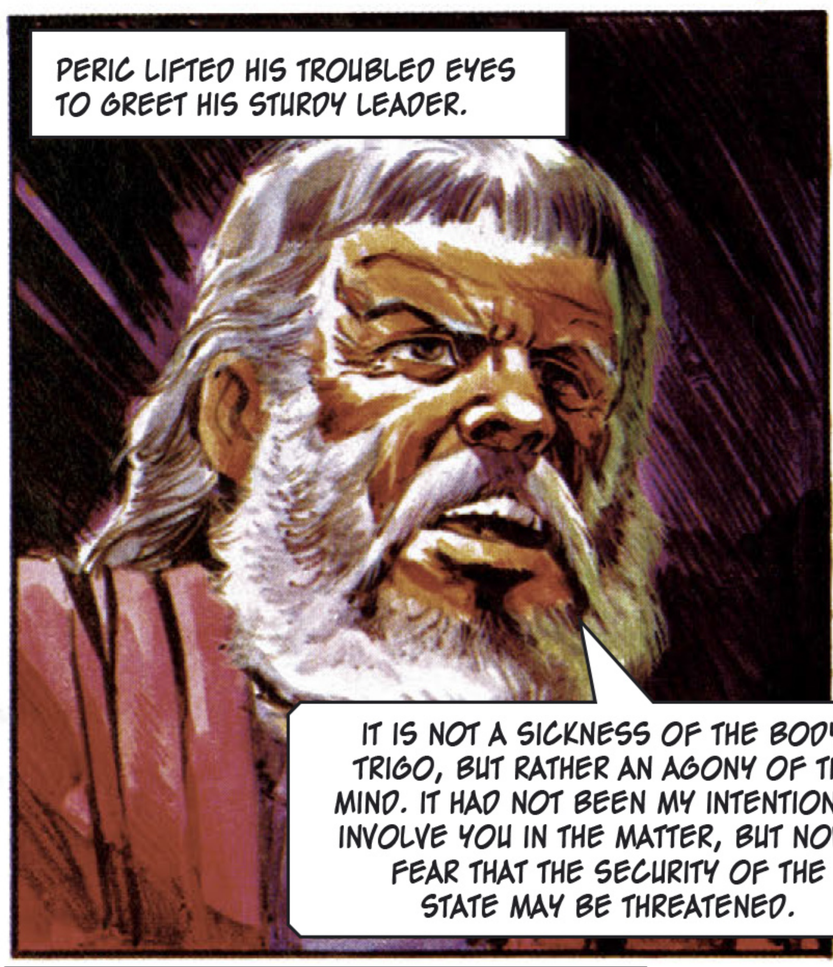
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** *884 - 897*

23rd December 1978 – 31st March 1979

Story by Ken Roscoe

Art by Gerry Wood


ANSWERING AN URGENT SUMMONS TRIGO HURRIES TO THE HOME OF HIS OLD FRIEND, PERIC.
I CAME AS SOON AS I RECEIVED YOUR MESSAGE. WHAT AILS YOU, OLD FRIEND? ARE YOU ILL?

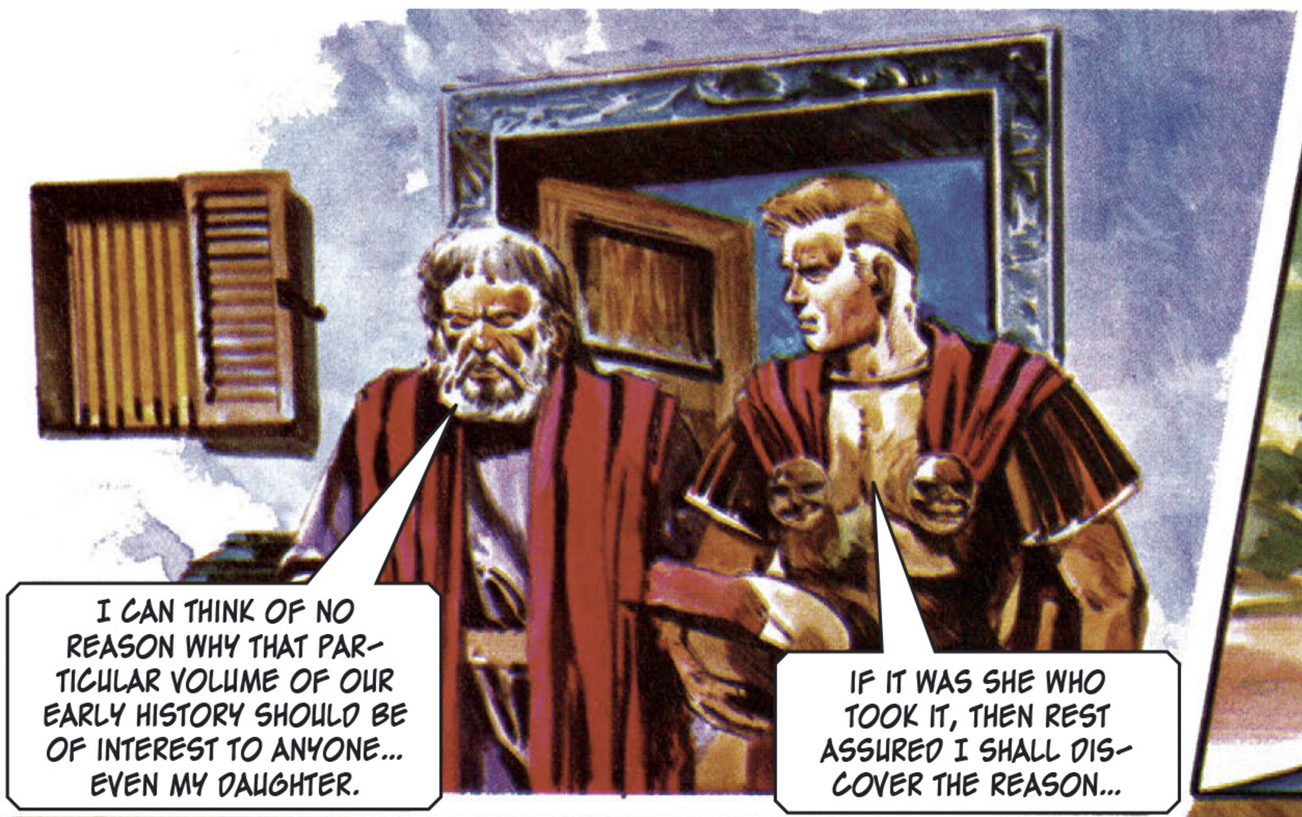

PERIC LIFTED HIS TROUBLED EYES TO GREET HIS STURDY LEADER.
IT IS NOT A SICKNESS OF THE BODY, TRIGO, BUT RATHER AN AGONY OF THE MIND. IT HAD NOT BEEN MY INTENTION TO INVOLVE YOU IN THE MATTER, BUT NOW I FEAR THAT THE SECURITY OF THE STATE MAY BE THREATENED.

THEN YOU ARE RIGHT TO ASK TO SEE ME. NOW, SPEAK, TELL ME WHAT OR WHO IS TROUBLING YOU, AND I SHALL DEAL WITH IT.
I AM IN SORE NEED OF HELP, BUT I BEG YOU, TREAD SOFTLY, FOR IT CONCERNS MY DAUGHTER, SALVIA.

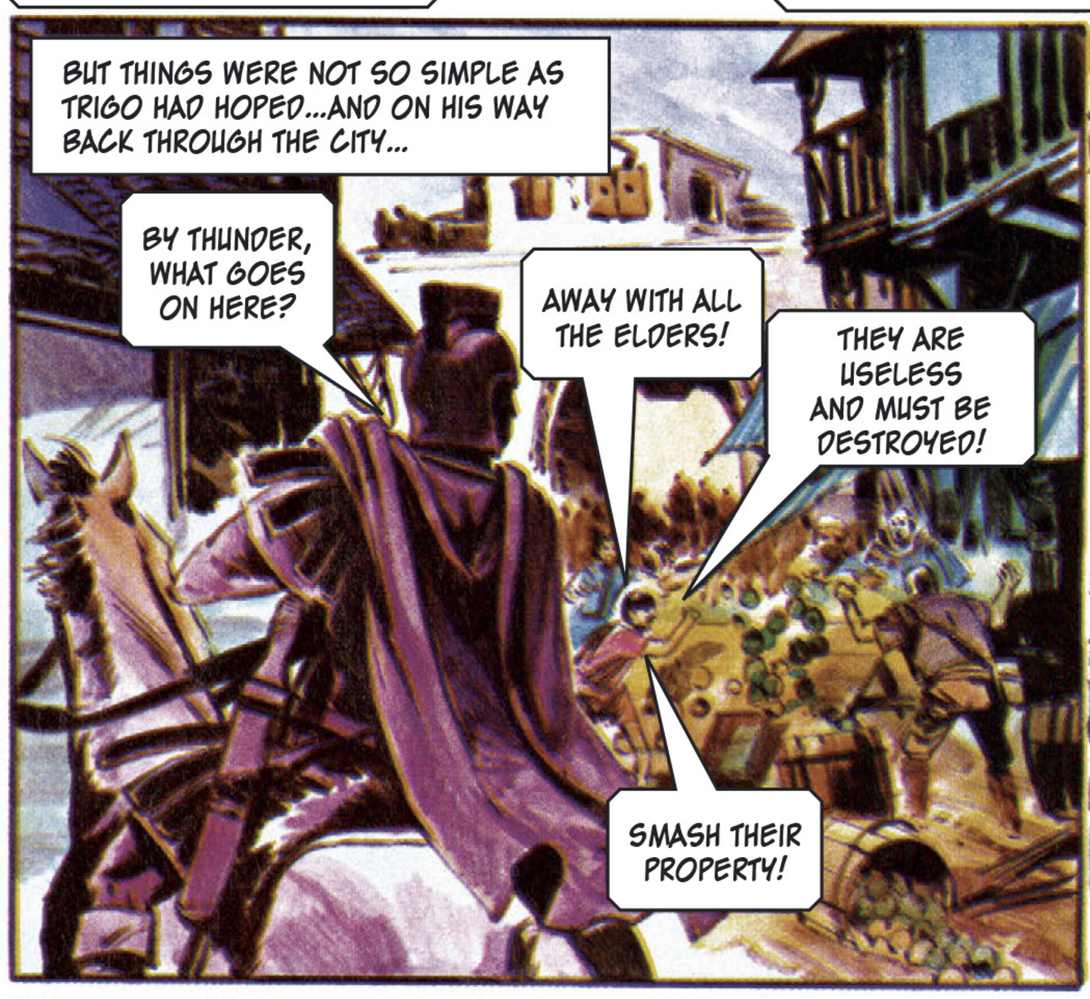
TRIGO FOUND IT HARD TO CREDIT WHAT THE WISE OLD SCIENTIST HAD TO TELL HIM.
SHE IS AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE FLOWERS THAT BLOOM ON THE PLAINS OF THARV, AND I LOVE HER DEARLY, BUT SOME DREADFUL CHANGE HAS COME OVER HER... SOME MENTAL SICKNESS...

PERIC BEGAN TO RELATE TO TRIGO THE STORY OF HIS DAUGHTER'S STRANGE BEHAVIOUR: "SOME TWO WEEKS AGO, THE NIGHTMARE BEGAN..."
I KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY FATHER, BUT YOU HAVE BECOME OLD AND FOOLISH, AND FOOLS SHOULD NOT BE IN POSITIONS OF POWER.
HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH THINGS WHEN YOU KNOW THEM TO BE UNTRUE?

"SUDDENLY IT SEEMED AS IF SOMETHING EVIL HAD TAKEN CHARGE OF HER FREE WILL..."
THEY ARE TRUE, I TELL YOU... YOU HAVE BECOME SENILE, AND SHOULD BE BANISHED. THERE ARE WISER AND BETTER MEN, EVEN THAN TRIGO...
"AS THE DAYS PASSED, SHE BECAME EVER MORE ANGRY AND WITHDRAWN, AND THEN ONE NIGHT, AS WORRY KEPT ME AWAKE..."
I HEAR MOVEMENTS... FOOTSTEPS...
"THE SOUNDS CAME FROM MY LABORATORY..."
"BUT WHEN I GOT INSIDE..."
BY THE STARS... SOMEONE HAS BEEN TAMPERING WITH MY RECORDS... BUT WHO?
HO! THERE... GUARDS...
...COULD THAT BE SALVIA?
WAS THE THIEF YOUR OWN DAUGHTER? AND WHAT OF THE BOOK?
I COULD NOT BE SURE... BUT SHE WAS NOT IN HER ROOM THAT NIGHT... AND AS FOR THE STOLEN VOLUME... THAT IS THE GREATEST MYSTERY OF ALL...

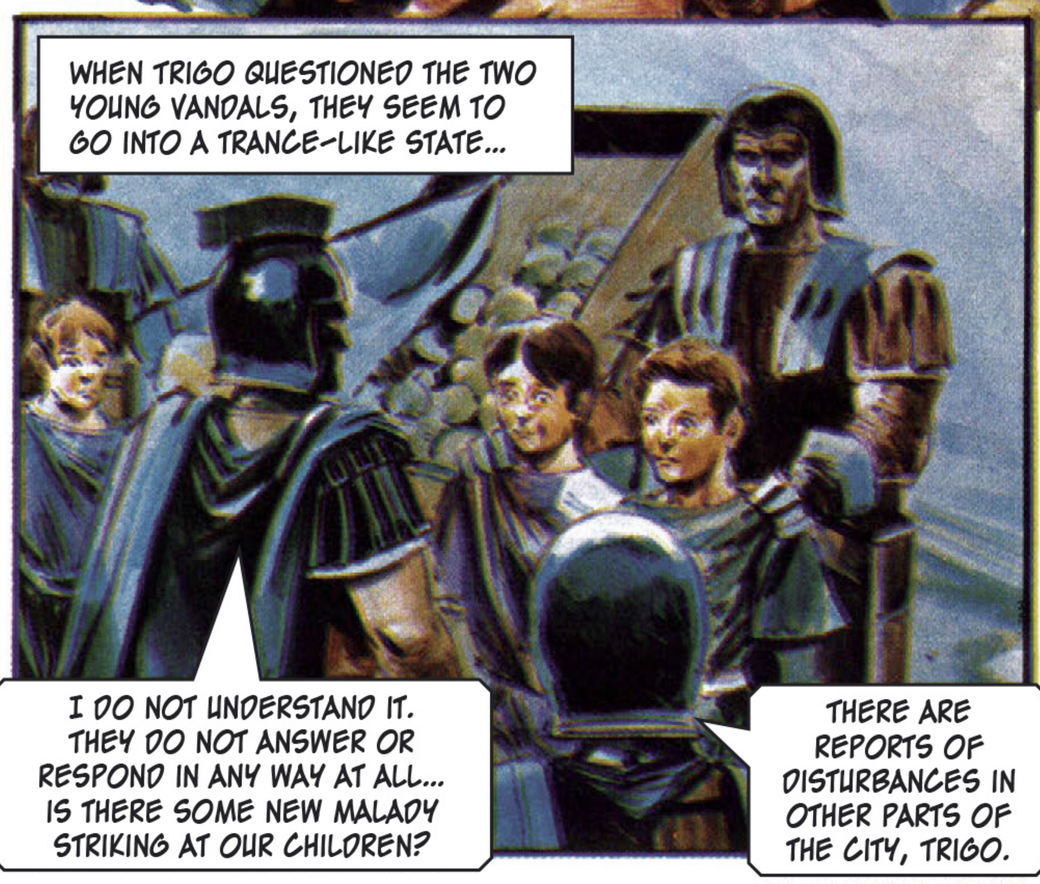

I CAN THINK OF NO REASON WHY THAT PARTICULAR VOLUME OF OUR EARLY HISTORY SHOULD BE OF INTEREST TO ANYONE... EVEN MY DAUGHTER.
IF IT WAS SHE WHO TOOK IT, THEN REST ASSURED I SHALL DISCOVER THE REASON...

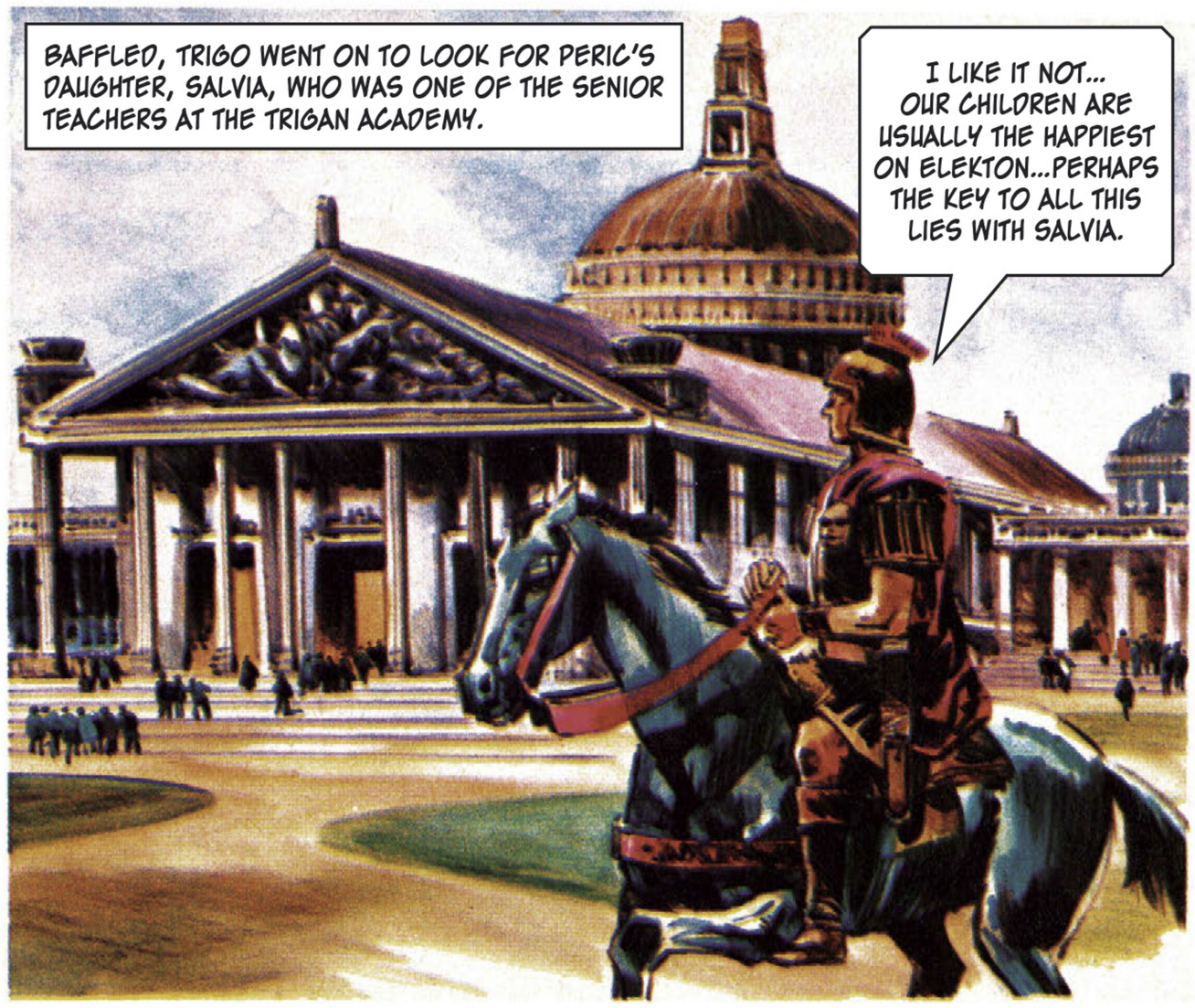
AND AS FOR HER STRANGE BEHAVIOUR, IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THERE MUST BE A SIMPLE EXPLANATION FOR THAT... I SHALL FIND HER, NEVER FEAR.
MAY THE GODS WATCH OVER YOU, TRIGO.


BUT THINGS WERE NOT SO SIMPLE AS TRIGO HAD HOPED...AND ON HIS WAY BACK THROUGH THE CITY...
BY THUNDER, WHAT GOES ON HERE?
AWAY WITH ALL THE ELDERS!
THEY ARE USELESS AND MUST BE DESTROYED!
SMASH THEIR PROPERTY!

ENOUGH, I SAY.
SEND FOR THE CITY GUARDS!
YAAAH!

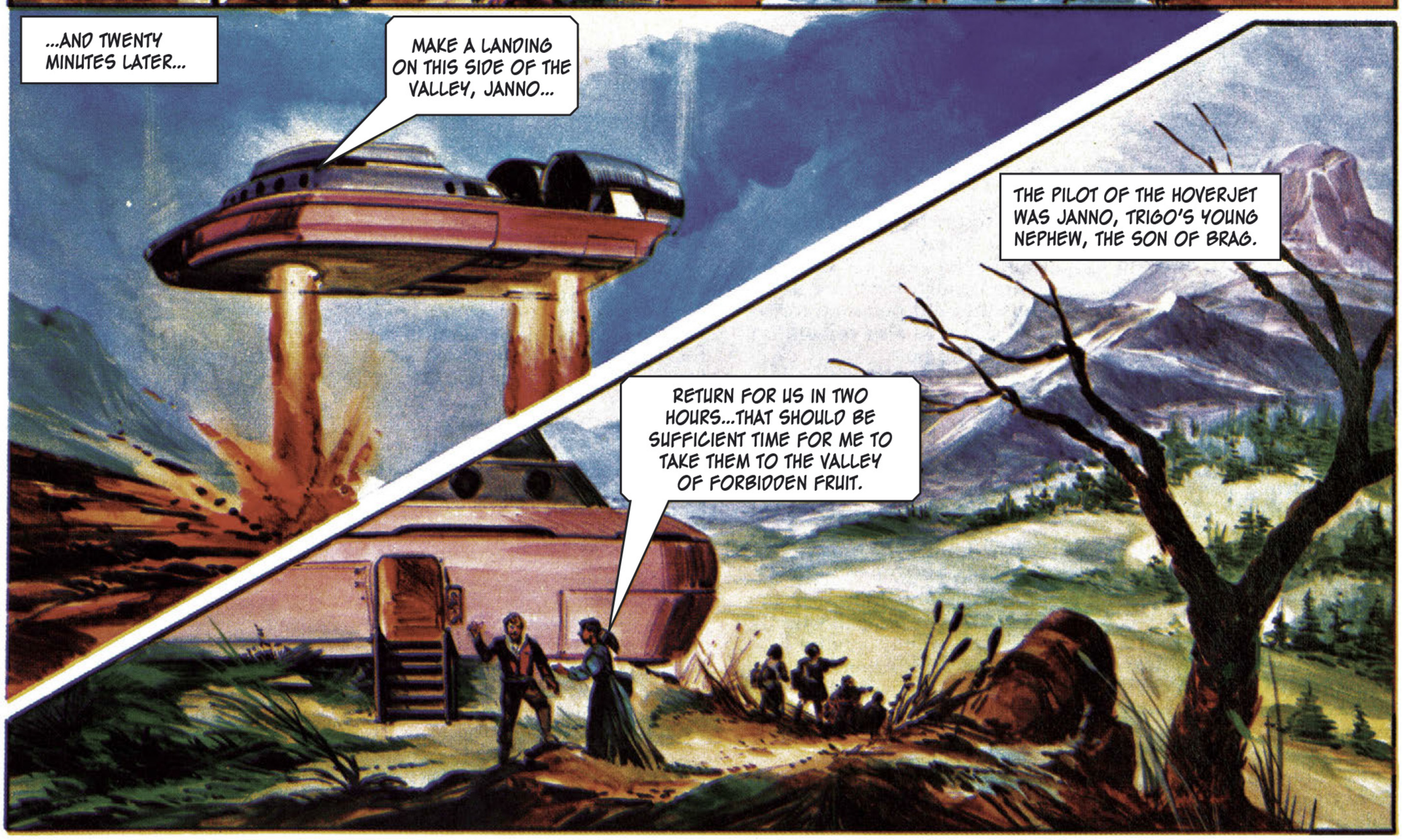
NOW, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?


WHEN TRIGO QUESTIONED THE TWO YOUNG VANDALS, THEY SEEM TO GO INTO A TRANCE-LIKE STATE...
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT. THEY DO NOT ANSWER OR RESPOND IN ANY WAY AT ALL... IS THERE SOME NEW MALADY STRIKING AT OUR CHILDREN?
THERE ARE REPORTS OF DISTURBANCES IN OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY, TRIGO.


BAFFLED, TRIGO WENT ON TO LOOK FOR PERIC'S DAUGHTER, SALVIA, WHO WAS ONE OF THE SENIOR TEACHERS AT THE TRIGAN ACADEMY.
I LIKE IT NOT... OUR CHILDREN ARE USUALLY THE HAPPIEST ON ELEKTON...PERHAPS THE KEY TO ALL THIS LIES WITH SALVIA.

INSIDE TRIGAN'S GREAT ACADEMY OF LEARNING...
IT'S TRIGO!
OUR LEADER HAS COME TO VISIT US.
THANK THE STARS THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE HAPPY AND NORMAL.

BUT AS TRIGO SOUGHT THE LECTURE ROOM WHERE SALVIA MIGHT BE...
KEEP TOGETHER, CHILDREN. WE'LL TAKE A HOVERJET TO THE COUNTRYSIDE...

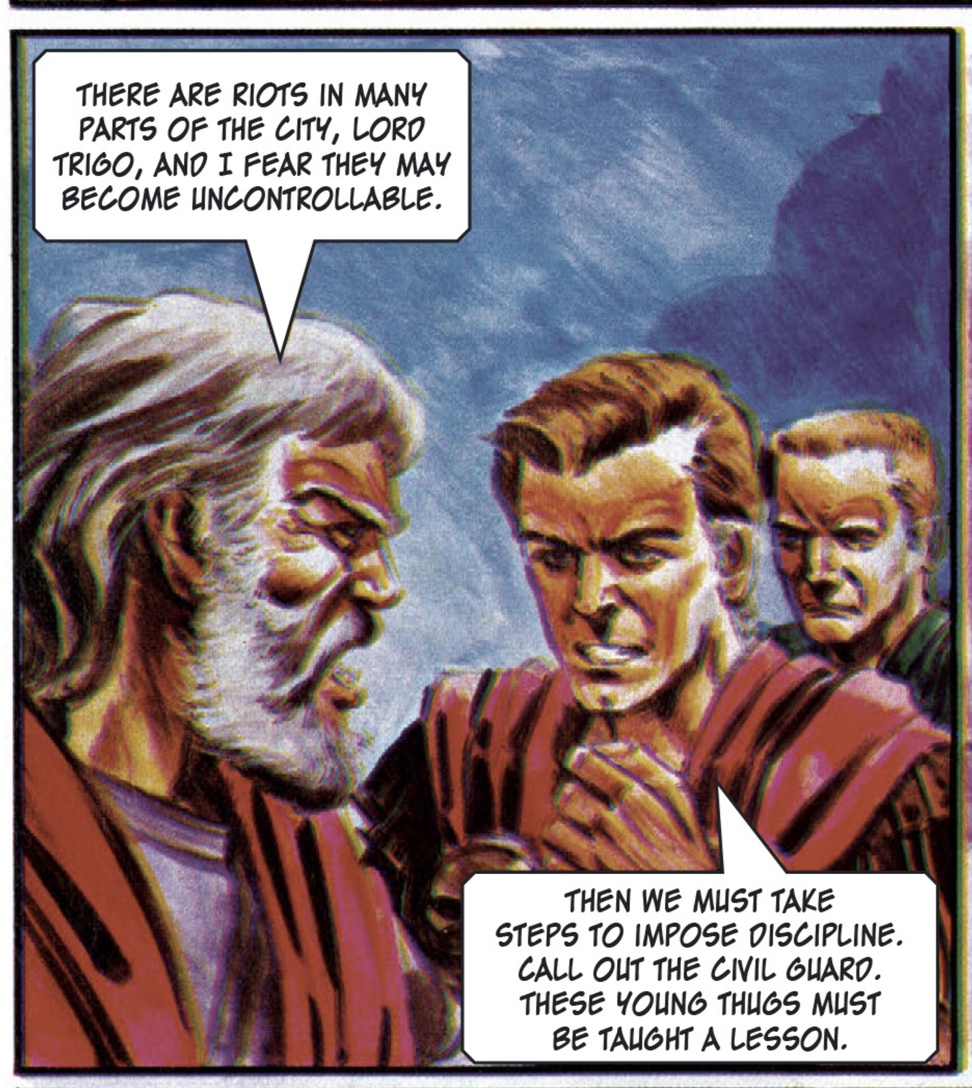

...AND TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
MAKE A LANDING ON THIS SIDE OF THE VALLEY, JANNO...
THE PILOT OF THE HOVERJET WAS JANNO, TRIGO'S YOUNG NEPHEW, THE SON OF BRAG.
RETURN FOR US IN TWO HOURS...THAT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR ME TO TAKE THEM TO THE VALLEY OF FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

AS BRAG'S SON, JANNO, TOOK THE HOVERJET BACK TO THE CITY, SALVIA TURNED TO HER CLASS OF STUDENTS.
KEEP TOGETHER, AND FOLLOW ME. WE WILL BEGIN OUR BOTANY LESSON IN THE VALLEY BEYOND THE HILL.
AND WHEN THEY REACHED THE CREST OF THE HILL...
OHH! JUST LOOK AT THOSE GORGEOUS FLOWERS!
AREN'T THEY INCREDIBLE! WHAT ARE THEY, MISS?
THEY ARE CALLED THE FLOWERS OF FORGETFULNESS – COME, I WILL TAKE YOU AMONGST THEM.
AS THE STUDENTS MOVED HAPPILY AMONGST THE BRILLIANT BLOOMS, SALVIA WATCHED THEM CLOSELY, AND...
THE SCENT IS AS IF IT HAD COME FROM THE GODS THEMSELVES.
TASTE THE FRUIT... IT IS TRULY A SWEETNESS THAT IS NOT OF THIS PLANET.
ENCOURAGED BY SALVIA, THE STUDENTS BEGAN EATING THE DELICIOUS FRUIT.
AT FIRST THEY FELT NOTHING EXCEPT THE ENJOYMENT OF THE MULTI-COLOURED FRUIT, AND THEN...
A GRADUAL CHANGE CAME OVER THEM, THEIR JOYOUS LAUGHTER TURNED TO SULLEN OBEDIENCE, AND WOULD HAVE TURNED TO ANGER, BUT FOR SALVIA'S FIRM INSTRUCTION...
NOW LISTEN, ALL OF YOU... YOU WILL HEAR ONLY MY VOICE AND OBEY MY INSTRUCTIONS...
WE HEAR YOU... WE WILL OBEY.

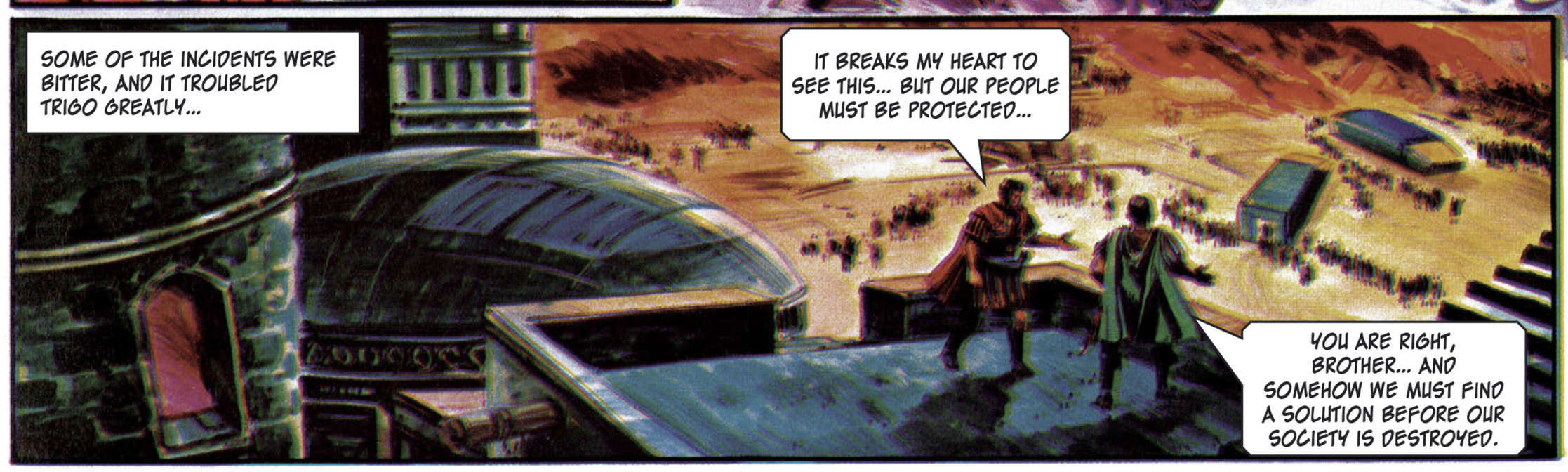
MEANWHILE A GIANT SPACECRAFT HOVERED IN A SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT A THOUSAND MILES OVERHEAD, ITS POWERFUL TELE-SENSORS DIRECTED AT THE SMALL VALLEY ON THE PLANET BELOW.
SET AUTO-CONTROLS FOR RE-ENTRY.
VERY WELL, YOUR MAJESTY.
AND IN COMMAND OF IT WAS ONE OF THE OLDEST AND DEADLIEST ENEMIES OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE – KING ZORTH OF LOKA.
SHE HAS DONE WELL, THIS SALVIA – A FEW MORE DAYS AND WE SHALL HAVE THE CITY OF TRIGAN UNDER OUR CONTROL.
PREPARE THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, AND REGISTER THE CO-ORDINATES, I MUST SPEAK WITH THE LOVELY SALVIA.
AS THE SPACECRAFT OPERATED ITS RETRO-SYSTEMS, AN AIRLOCK DOOR SLID OPEN IN ITS MASSIVE HULL...
NOW WE SHALL DISCOVER IF THE WOMAN HAS OBEYED THE TELEPATHIC INSTRUCTIONS AND OBTAINED THE BOOK...WITHOUT THAT OUR PLANS MAY WELL FAIL – AND IF THEY FAIL, THEN WE ARE ALL DOOMED.
AHH! EXCELLENT, WITH THIS IN OUR POSSESSION, THERE IS NOTHING TO PREVENT US BEING SUCCESSFUL WITH OUR PLANS.

WITH THE VOLUME RECORDING PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE SAFELY ABOARD THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, KING ZORTH TOOK HIS LEAVE OF SALVIA.
REMEMBER, I ZORTH AM YOUR LORD AND MASTER. YOU WILL OBEY THE MESSAGES OF MY MIND AND MINE ALONE.
I UNDERSTAND... I AM YOURS TO COMMAND.

AS THE EVIL KING OF LOKA ZOOMED AWAY IN HIS ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, BACK IN THE CITY OF TRIGAN, TRIGO RECEIVED HIS BROTHER, BRAG...
JANNO, TOO?
BUT I TELL YOU, BROTHER, SOMEONE IS CAUSING DIS-AFFECTION AMONGST THE YOUTH OF OUR NATION. EVEN MY OWN SON, JANNO, HEEDS ME NOT. ONLY TODAY HE TOOK MY PERSONAL HOVERJET WITHOUT PERMISSION.


THERE ARE RIOTS IN MANY PARTS OF THE CITY, LORD TRIGO, AND I FEAR THEY MAY BECOME UNCONTROLLABLE.
THEN WE MUST TAKE STEPS TO IMPOSE DISCIPLINE. CALL OUT THE CIVIL GUARD. THESE YOUNG THUGS MUST BE TAUGHT A LESSON.

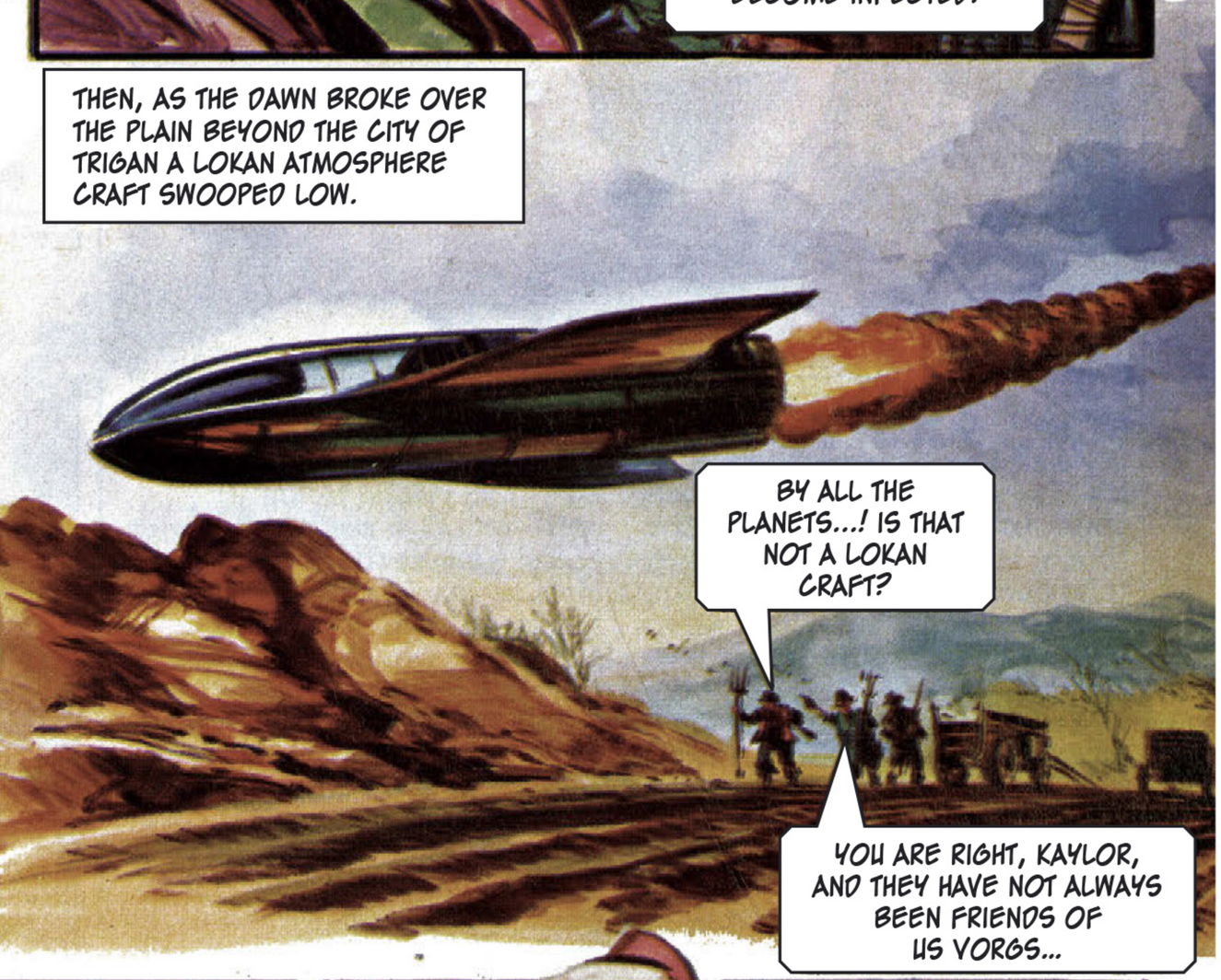
AND SO, AFTER A SERIES OF SKIRMISHES, HUNDREDS OF YOUNG TRIGANS WERE ROUNDED UP BY THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER...
DOWN WITH ALL AUTHORITY!

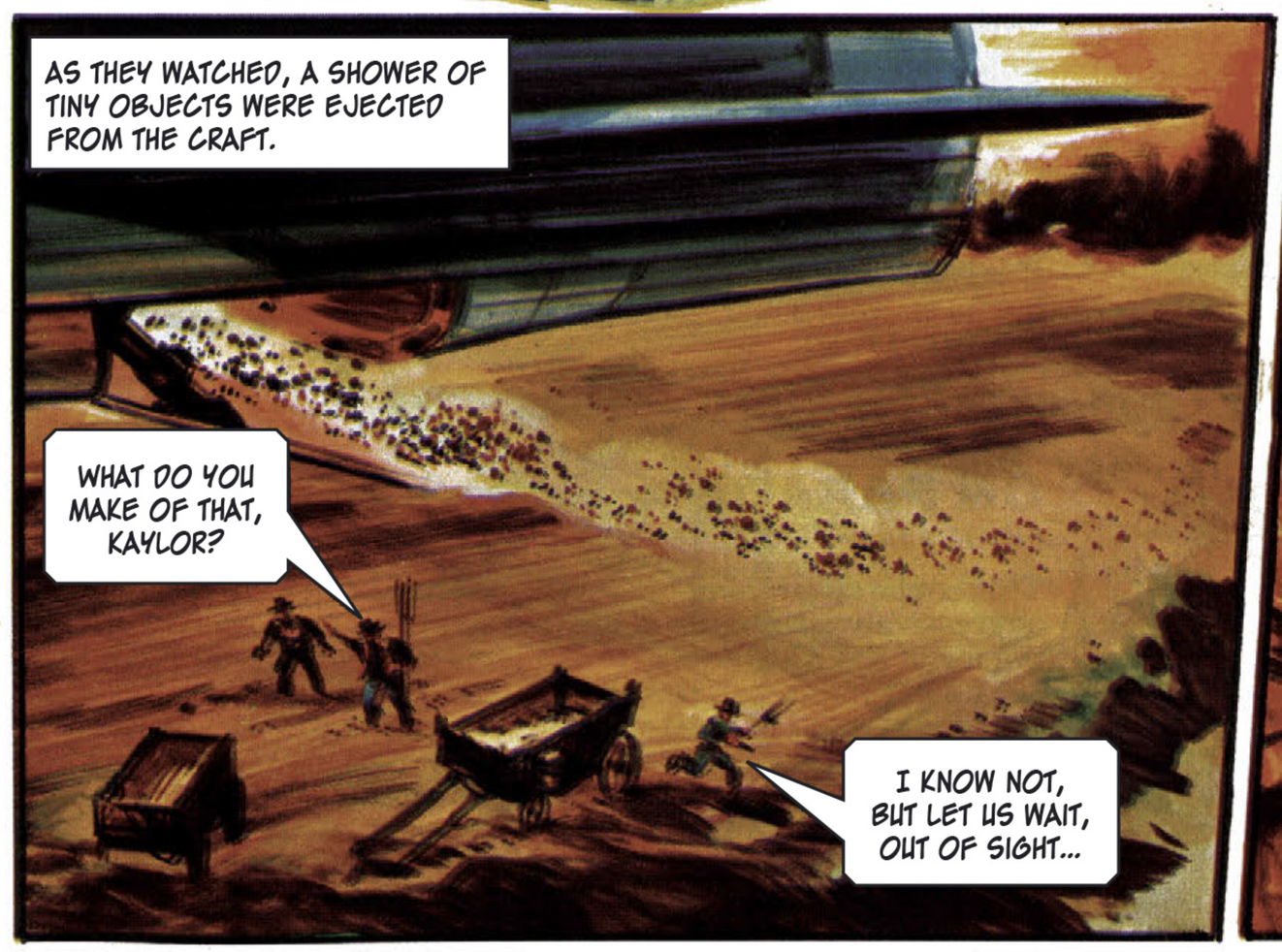

SOME OF THE INCIDENTS WERE BITTER, AND IT TROUBLED TRIGO GREATLY...
IT BREAKS MY HEART TO SEE THIS... BUT OUR PEOPLE MUST BE PROTECTED...
YOU ARE RIGHT, BROTHER... AND SOMEHOW WE MUST FIND A SOLUTION BEFORE OUR SOCIETY IS DESTROYED.

LATER THAT DAY WHEN SALVIA RETURNED WITH HER STUDENTS...
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO... PLACE SOME FRUIT IN THE DESKS AND LOCKERS OF YOUR FRIENDS, AND THEN THEY, TOO CAN ENJOY IT...NOW, GO!
WE UNDERSTAND...
WE WILL OBEY...

AND SO, WHILE TRIGO HELD A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS HEADED BY OLD PERIC...
I SAY WE SHOULD PLANT SPIES AMONG THE STUDENTS' ORGANISATIONS TO SEEK OUT THOSE PREACHING INSURRECTION...
BUT IF THE MALADY IS VIRULENT THEY ALSO WILL BECOME INFECTED.

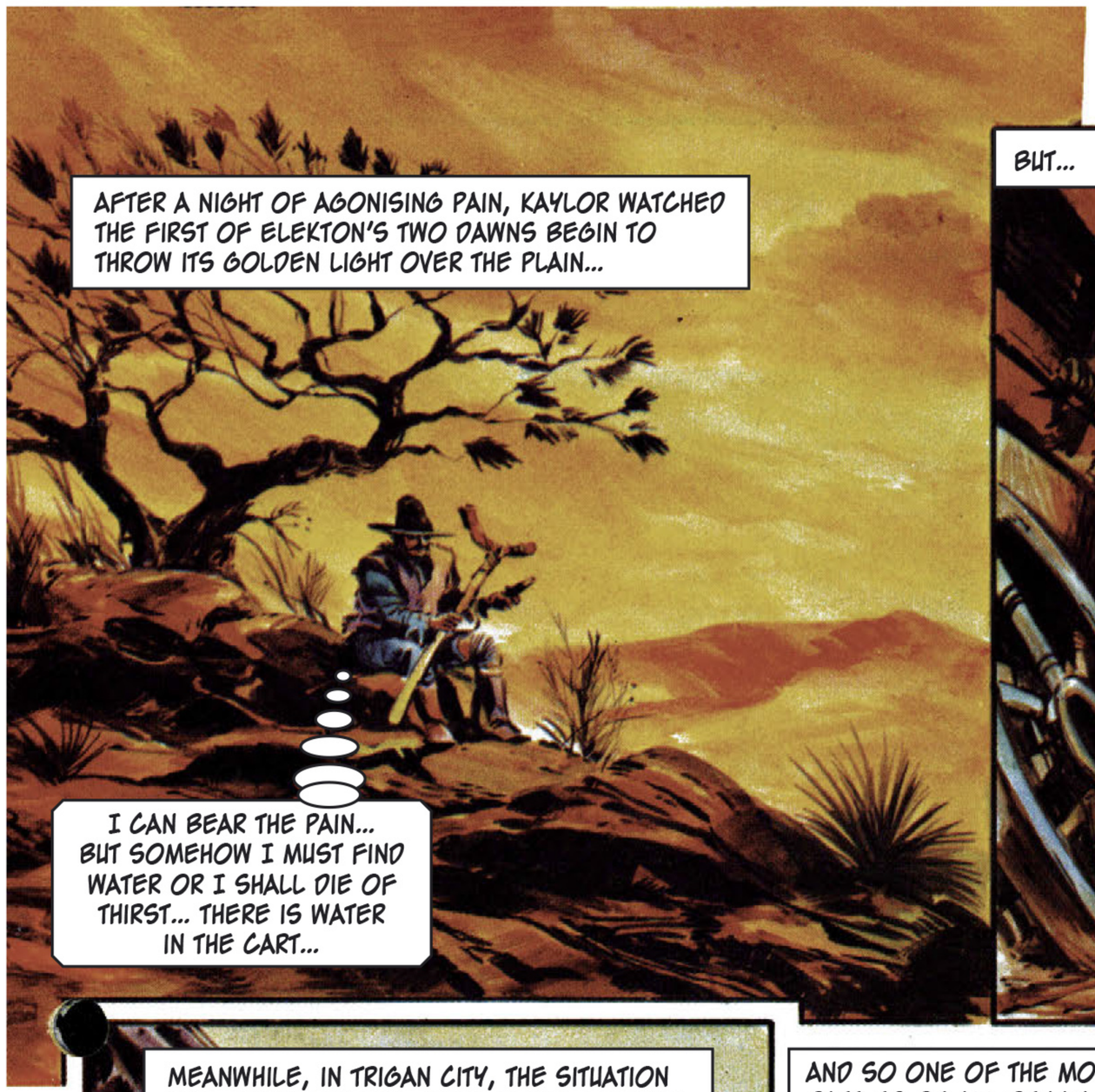
...THE MALAISE CAUSED BY THE FLOWERS OF FORGETFULNESS WAS SPREAD EVEN WIDER...

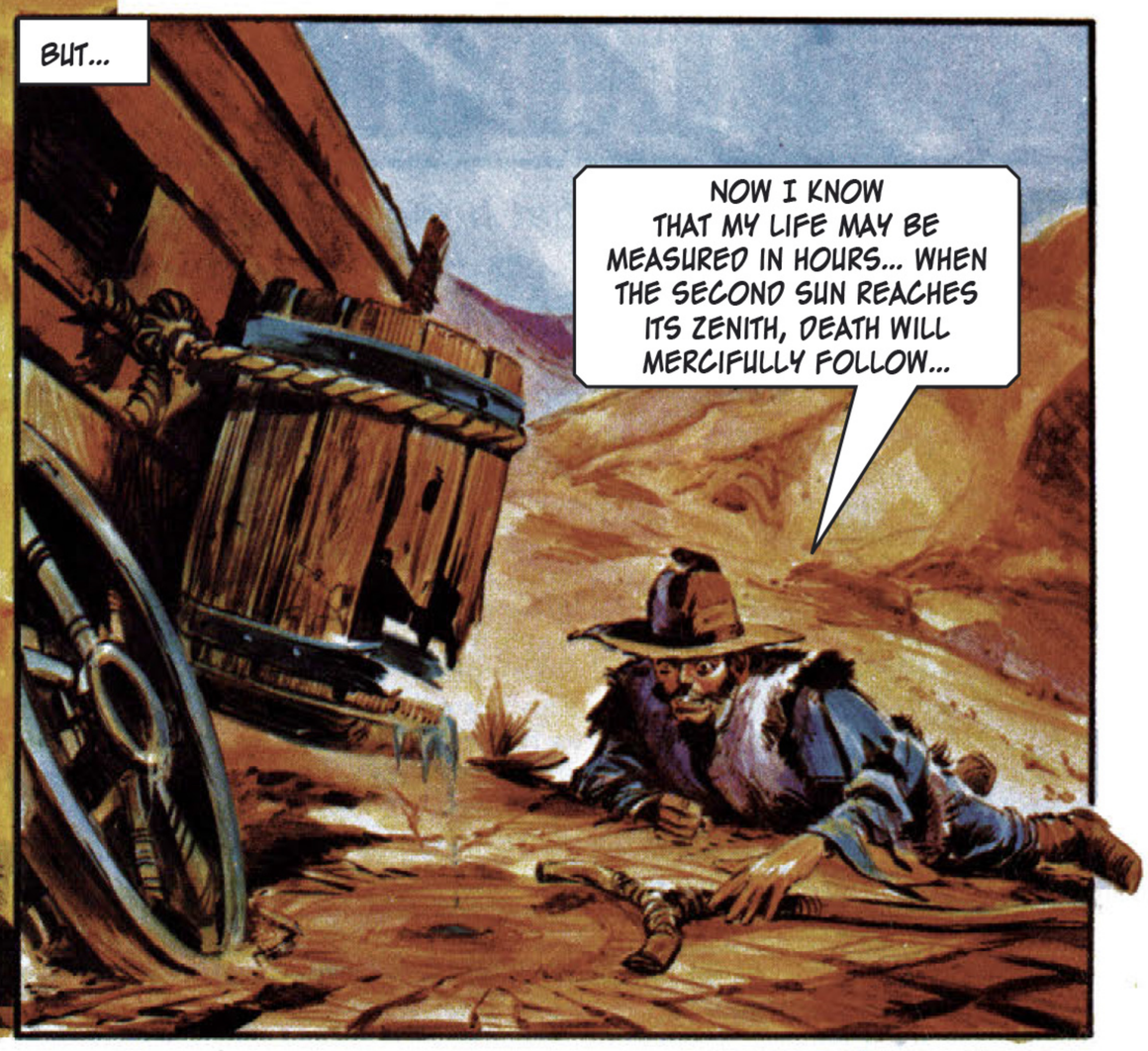

THEN, AS THE DAWN BROKE OVER THE PLAIN BEYOND THE CITY OF TRIGAN A LOKAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPED LOW.
BY ALL THE PLANETS...! IS THAT NOT A LOKAN CRAFT?
YOU ARE RIGHT, KAYLOR, AND THEY HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN FRIENDS OF US VORGS...


AS THEY WATCHED, A SHOWER OF TINY OBJECTS WERE EJECTED FROM THE CRAFT.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT, KAYLOR?
I KNOW NOT, BUT LET US WAIT, OUT OF SIGHT...

THOSE FOOL FARMERS... QUICK! THEY MUST BE ELIMINATED!

AS THE THREE TRIGAN FARMERS RAN FOR COVER, THEY HEARD THE SCREAM OF A HEAT PROJECTILE HURTLING TOWARDS THEM...
THE LOKAN HAS OPENED FIRE ON US...
...QUICK... THE ROCKS, OR WE'LL BE ROASTED ALIVE!
AND A SPLIT SECOND LATER...
AAAAAGH!
YEEEAGH!
MAKE A LOW PASS OVER THOSE ROCKS, PILOT. I NEED TO BE SURE THEY ARE FINISHED.
NO SIGN OF LIFE THERE, ALL HIGHEST.
GOOD... NOW WE MUST RETURN TO THE MOTHER SHIP...BEFORE SOME OTHER INQUISITIVE TRIGANS ARRIVE.
THE FARMER CALLED KAYLOR STILL HAD A SLIM GRIP ON LIFE...
TRIGO MUST LEARN OF THIS... IF I CAN SOME-HOW STAY ALIVE...


AFTER A NIGHT OF AGONISING PAIN, KAYLOR WATCHED THE FIRST OF ELEKTON'S TWO DAWNS BEGIN TO THROW ITS GOLDEN LIGHT OVER THE PLAIN...
I CAN BEAR THE PAIN... BUT SOMEHOW I MUST FIND WATER OR I SHALL DIE OF THIRST... THERE IS WATER IN THE CART...


BUT...
NOW I KNOW THAT MY LIFE MAY BE MEASURED IN HOURS... WHEN THE SECOND SUN REACHES ITS ZENITH, DEATH WILL MERCIFULLY FOLLOW...

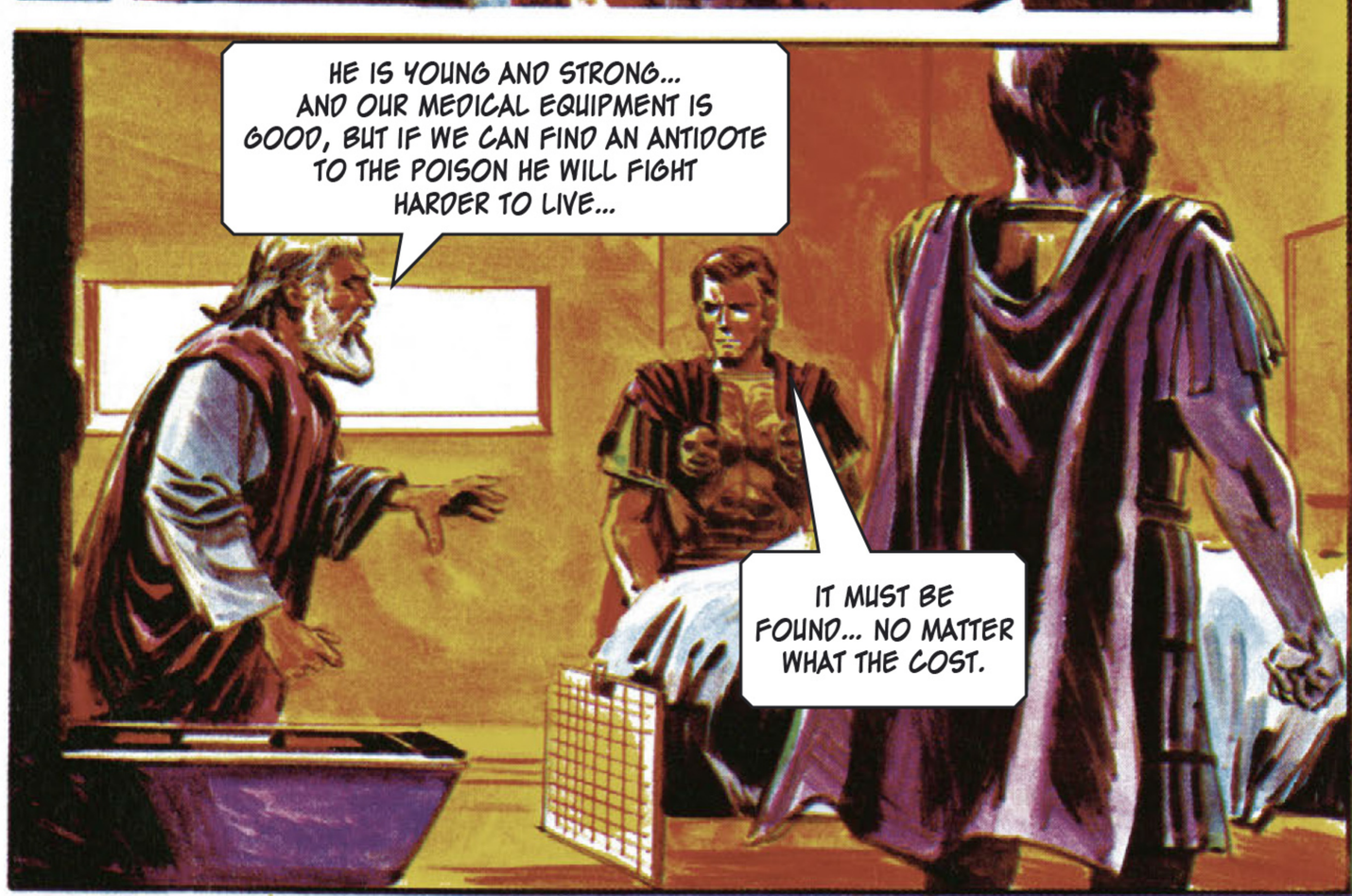
MEANWHILE, IN TRIGAN CITY, THE SITUATION WAS DETERIORATING, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF THE SECURITY FORCES...THE FRUIT HAD DONE ITS JOB WELL...
THIS IS A SAD DAY FOR THE TRIGAN EMPIRE... WHEN WE HAVE TO DO BATTLE WITH OUR OWN CHILDREN.
MY OWN SON IS WITH THEM... THIS SICKNESS MUST BE STOPPED...

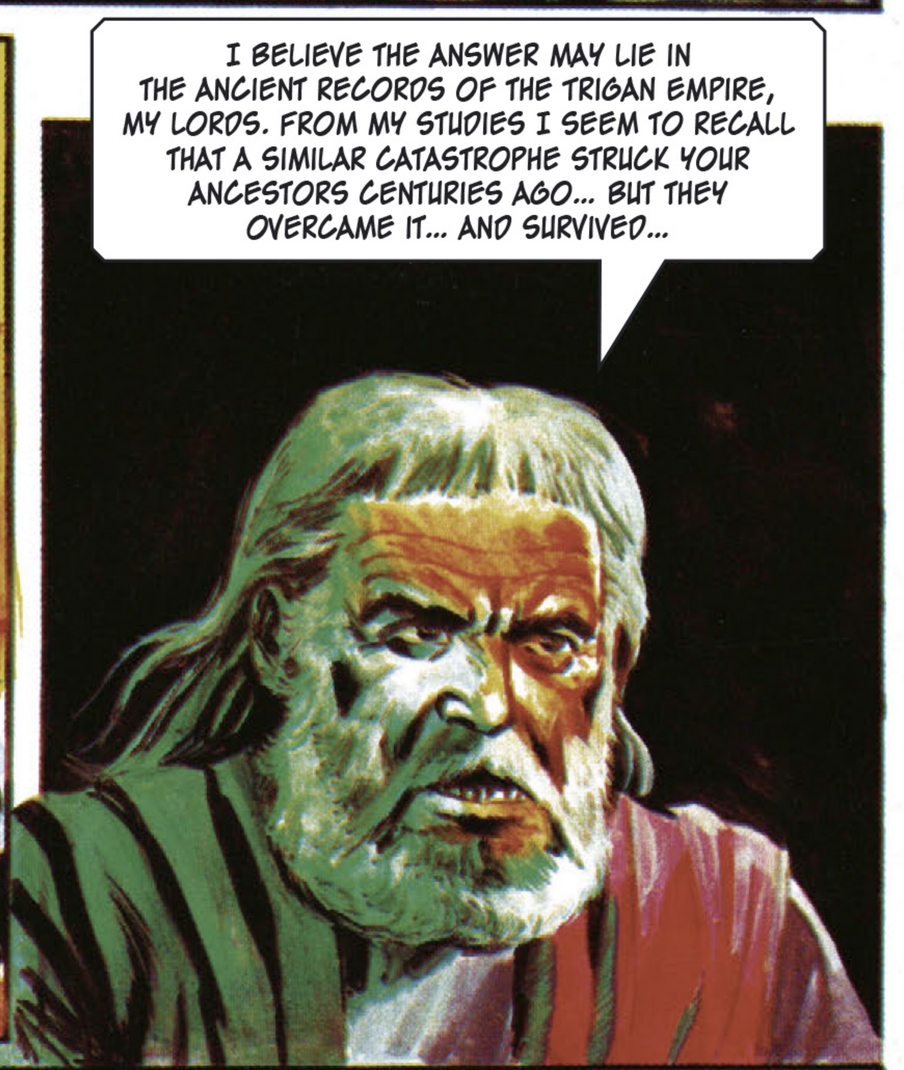
AND SO ONE OF THE MOST TRAGIC BATTLES OF ALL BEGAN...

IN AN ANTEROOM NEAR THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TRIGO AND HIS BROTHER, BRAG, COULD HEAR THE SOUNDS OF THE TERRIBLE STRUGGLE...
IN A MATTER OF WEEKS THE SICKNESS HAS GAINED MUCH HEADWAY...
LORD TRIGO, BRAG... I BRING SAD NEWS...
MY LORD, YOUR NEPHEW, JANNO HAS BEEN SEVERELY INJURED IN THE FIGHT AT THE ACADEMY... HE IS LOSING BLOOD, AND I FEAR FOR HIS LIFE...BUT THAT IS NOT ALL... I HAVE DISCOVERED WHAT IS CAUSING THE SICKNESS!

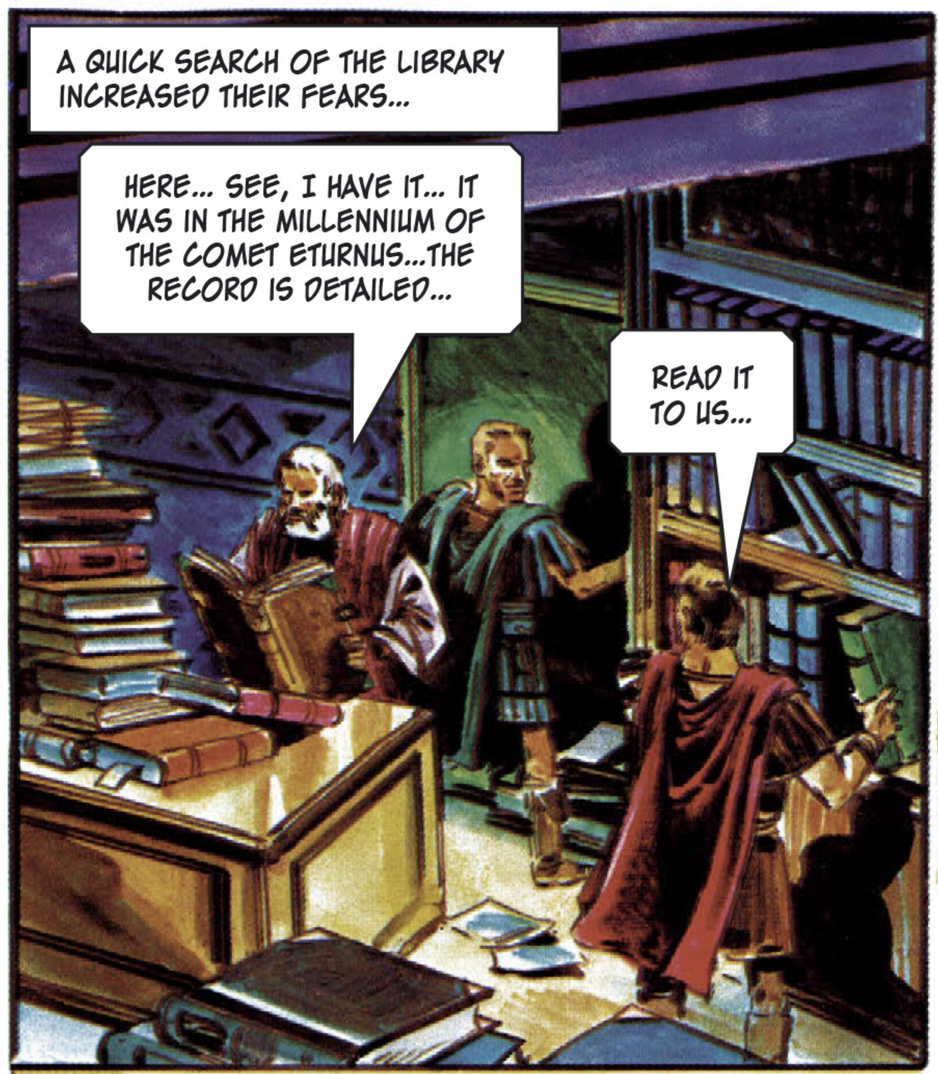
OLD PERIC'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE HAD DISCOVERED THE CAUSE OF THE SICKNESS BROUGHT BRAG AND TRIGO TO THEIR FEET...
YOU HAVE FOUND THE REASON FOR THIS TERRIBLE MALADY?
YES, LORD TRIGO. I HAVE ANALYSED A SAMPLE OF BLOOD FROM JANNO, AND IT CONTAINED A QUANTITY OF POISON...
JANNO... POISONED! WE MUST GET TO HIM IMMEDIATELY...

IN TRIGAN'S MAIN HOSPITAL, BRAG'S SON, JANNO, LAY IN AN ISOLATION WARD...
THERE IS NO DOUBT... OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DELIBERATELY POISONED BY A DRUG WHICH PARALYSES THE MIND, AND MAKES THEM PREY TO THE FIRST PERSON WHO WISHES TO CONTROL THEIR ACTIONS...
BY THE STARS, SOME EVIL DOER IS AT WORK AMONGST US...
MY SON, WE MUST SAVE HIM.


HE IS YOUNG AND STRONG... AND OUR MEDICAL EQUIPMENT IS GOOD, BUT IF WE CAN FIND AN ANTIDOTE TO THE POISON HE WILL FIGHT HARDER TO LIVE...
IT MUST BE FOUND... NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.


I BELIEVE THE ANSWER MAY LIE IN THE ANCIENT RECORDS OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE, MY LORDS. FROM MY STUDIES I SEEM TO RECALL THAT A SIMILAR CATASTROPHE STRUCK YOUR ANCESTORS CENTURIES AGO... BUT THEY OVERCAME IT... AND SURVIVED...

BUT YOUR DAUGHTER, SALVIA...YOU SAID SHE MAY HAVE REMOVED ONE OF THE BOOKS FROM YOUR LIBRARY... COULD IT BE THE ONE WE NEED?
WE MUST SEARCH AT ONCE... IF IT IS THE BOOK WE NEED, THEN ALL MAY BE LOST.


A QUICK SEARCH OF THE LIBRARY INCREASED THEIR FEARS...
HERE... SEE, I HAVE IT... IT WAS IN THE MILLENNIUM OF THE COMET ETURNUS...THE RECORD IS DETAILED...
READ IT TO US...

BRAG AND TRIGO LISTENED AS THE PAST CAME TO LIFE IN THEIR MINDS...
"AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE OF ONE HUNDRED WERE SEEKING A BETTER LAND ON THE CONTINENT OF VICTRIS...HUNGER DROVE THEM TO EAT A FRUIT THEY HAD NOT SEEN BEFORE..."

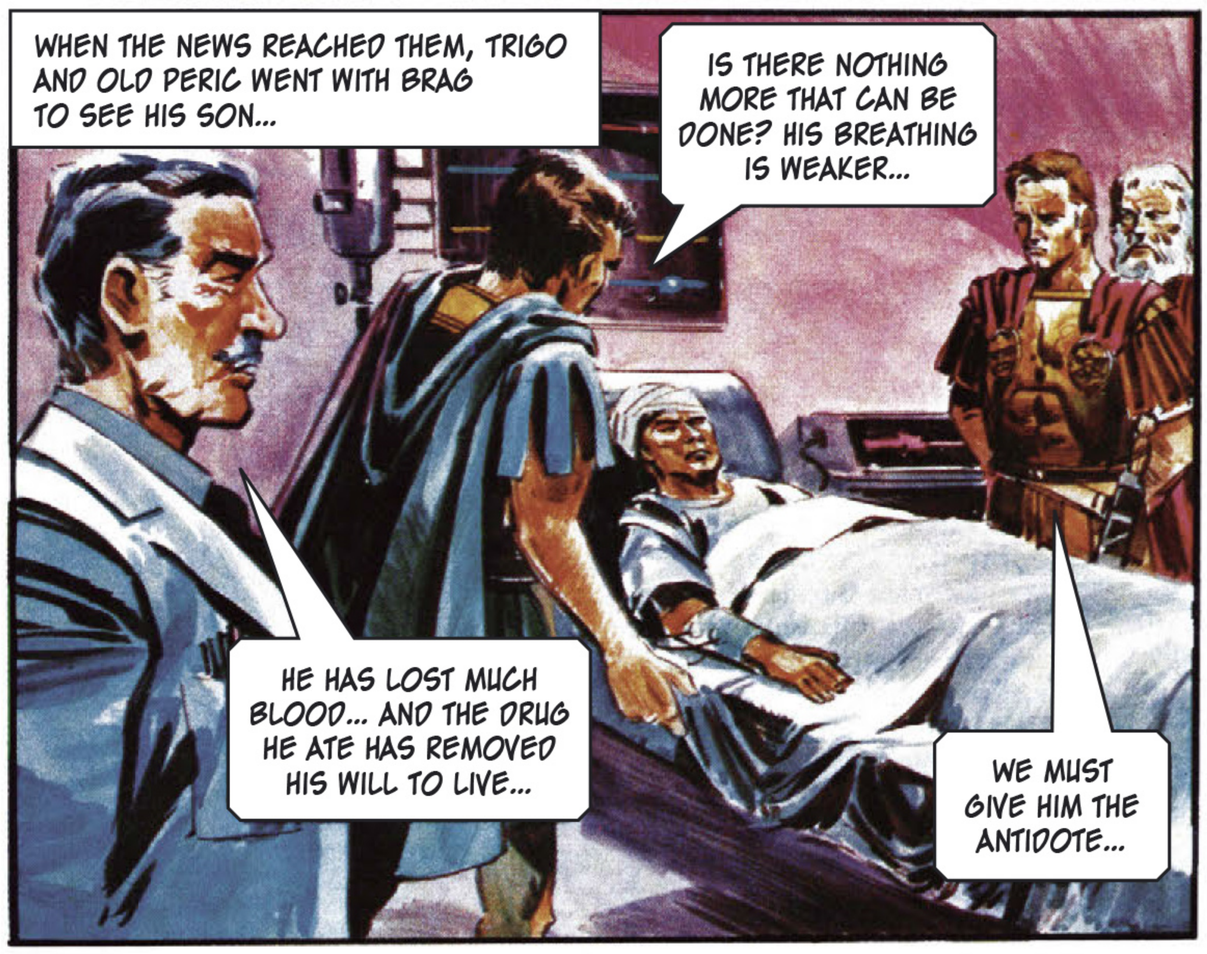
"SOON, THEY ALL FELL ILL AND SEEMED TO LOSE ALL MEMORY OF THEIR PAST...THEIR MINDS WERE EMPTIED OF ALL THOUGHT AND WHEN THEY REJOINED THEIR TRIBE..."

"THEY FELL UPON THEM WITH MINDLESS FURY..."
WHAT AILS THEM? ARE THEY MAD?

THEN PERIC REACHED THE FINAL PAGE OF THE BOOK...
THE INFECTION SPREAD, AND FOR MANY WEEKS THE WHOLE TRIBE WAS IN DANGER OF DESTROYING ITSELF WITH THE FRUIT OF FORGETFULNESS... THERE THIS BOOK ENDS...
AND IT IS THE FOLLOWING THAT WAS TAKEN?

I FEAR SO, MY LORD... BUT WAIT...THERE IS A NOTE...THE SECRET OF THE ANTIDOTE IS NOT HERE, BUT IT TELLS WHERE A SAMPLE MAY BE FOUND!

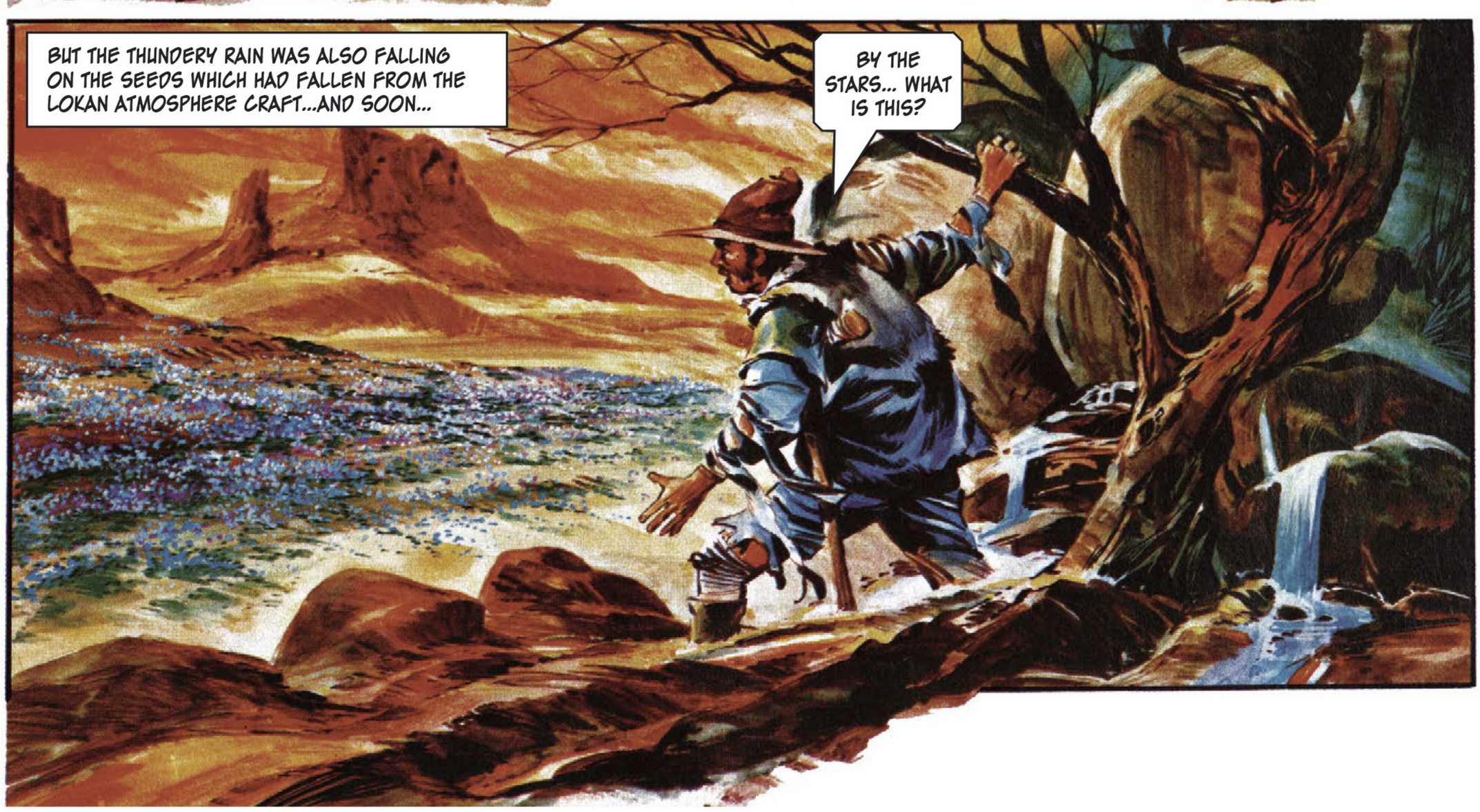
THE VOLUME CONTAINING THE SECRET FORMULA FOR THE ANTIDOTE WAS THE ONE THAT WAS TAKEN BY PERIC'S DAUGHTER, SALVIA...
VAULT
WE DO NOT HAVE THE FORMULA, LORD TRIGO, AND WE HAVE MY DAUGHTER TO BLAME FOR THAT, BUT IF WE CAN FIND THE SAMPLE OF THE ANTIDOTE...
LEAD ON, OLD FRIEND... THERE IS LITTLE TIME LEFT...
THE INSTRUCTIONS WHERE TO FIND THE SAMPLE PHIAL OF THE ANTIDOTE WERE PRINTED INSIDE THE BACK COVER OF THE OLD BOOK...
THIS PLACE HAS BEEN UNTOUCHED FOR CENTURIES... LET US HOPE SALVIA HAS OVERLOOKED IT...
QUICKLY, PERIC IDENTIFIED THE STRANGE HIEROGLYPH OF THE ANCIENT TRIGAN LANGUAGE...THEN HE HESITATED...
WELL, SPEAK OLD MAN... IS THE SAMPLE THERE?
AYE, IT IS... BUT...
THE PASSAGE OF TIME HAS DRIED THE CORK, AND MUCH OF THE FLUID HAS EVAPORATED... THERE MAY BE ENOUGH FOR OUR LABORATORY TO ANALYSE IT...
IN THE NEARBY HOSPITAL, YOUNG JANNO'S CONDITION WAS GIVING THE DOCTORS CAUSE FOR CONCERN...
HIS STRENGTH IS FAILING FAST... HE SEEMS TO HAVE NO WILL TO FIGHT...
WE MUST SEND FOR HIS FATHER IMMEDIATELY...


WHEN THE NEWS REACHED THEM, TRIGO AND OLD PERIC WENT WITH BRAG TO SEE HIS SON...
IS THERE NOTHING MORE THAT CAN BE DONE? HIS BREATHING IS WEAKER...
HE HAS LOST MUCH BLOOD... AND THE DRUG HE ATE HAS REMOVED HIS WILL TO LIVE...
WE MUST GIVE HIM THE ANTIDOTE...

MY LORDS, WE HAVE A TERRIBLE CHOICE...THERE IS SUFFICIENT HERE FOR ONLY ONE DOSE...IF WE USE IT TO SAVE JANNO, THERE WILL BE NONE LEFT FOR US TO ANALYSE SO THAT MORE CAN BE MADE.
...AND ALL OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ARE IN DESPERATE NEED OF IT...
OH... NO... NO!

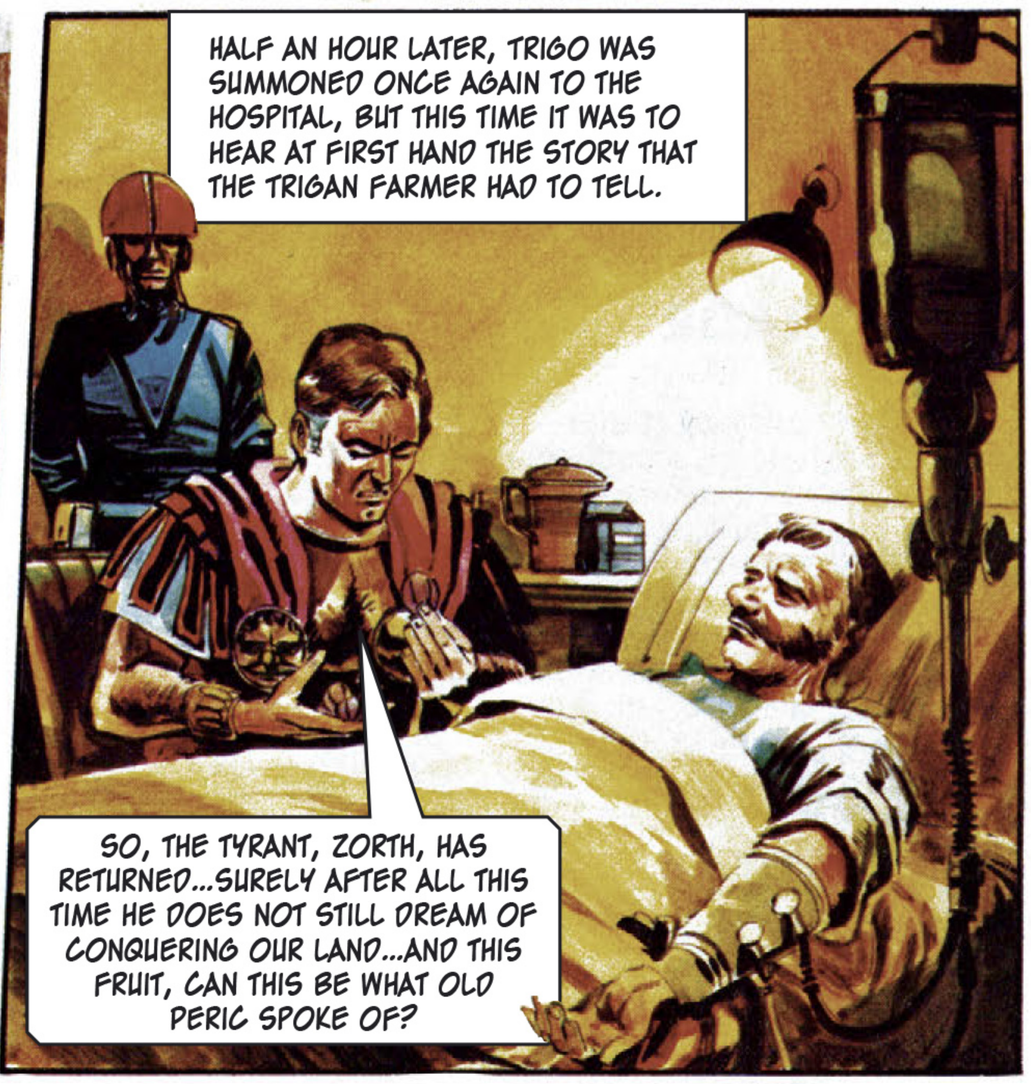
WHILE TRIGO AND BRAG FACED THEIR AGONISING DECISION... ANOTHER DRAMA WAS REACHING ITS CLIMAX FAR OUT ON THE PLAINS OF VORG, WHERE THE FARMER, KAYLOR, LAY NEAR DEATH...

THEN SUDDENLY, A FEW LARGE DROPS OF RAIN BEGAN TO FALL ON HIS PAIN-WRACKED BODY...
AAAAH... WATER... WATER... THE GODS ARE SMILING UPON ME...


BUT THE THUNDERY RAIN WAS ALSO FALLING ON THE SEEDS WHICH HAD FALLEN FROM THE LOKAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...AND SOON...
BY THE STARS... WHAT IS THIS?

REFRESHED BY THE TORRENTIAL RAIN, KAYLOR, THE INJURED FARMER, GAZED WITH ASTONISHMENT AT THE FLOWER-STREWN VALLEY...
IN ALL MY LIFE ON THE LAND I HAVE NOT SEEN SUCH A PLANT... AND FROM SEEDS DROPPED BY THAT EVIL MONSTER FROM LOKA...
UNABLE TO MOVE BECAUSE OF HIS INJURIES, HA HAD ONLY ONE COURSE OPEN TO HIM...
EVEN THOUGH ZORTH MAY RETURN, I MUST LIGHT A SIGNAL FIRE...
MEANWHILE, TRIGO, AND HIS BROTHER, BRAG, WRESTLED WITH THEIR CONSCIENCES WHILE JANNO'S LIFE SLOWLY EBBED AWAY...
HE IS YOUR SON, BRAG... I CANNOT FORCE A DECISION ON YOU... BUT IF HE WERE TO DIE I FEAR I WOULD LOSE YOU, MY BROTHER, ALSO... I SAY HE MUST BE GIVEN THE ANTIDOTE...
BLESS YOU, TRIGO... WHEN THE GODS OF ELEKTON ARE REVEALED YOU WILL BE AMONGST THEM...
SO BE IT...
AND SO, WHILE THE DOCTORS WORKED TO SAVE JANNO...
...A LONE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS RETURNING FROM A ROUTINE PATROL...
LET US HOPE THAT WE ARE IN TIME...
REDUCE ALTITUDE, ELKAN, I THINK THERE IS SOMEONE IN TROUBLE DOWN THERE...

WITHIN MINUTES OF THE CRAFT LANDING, KAYLOR HAD GASPED OUT HIS STORY...
...IT WAS THE LOKAN, ZORTH, WHO CAUSED THESE PLANTS TO GROW, EH?
AYE, AND IT WAS HE WHO SLEW MY COMPANIONS... LORD TRIGO MUST BE TOLD.

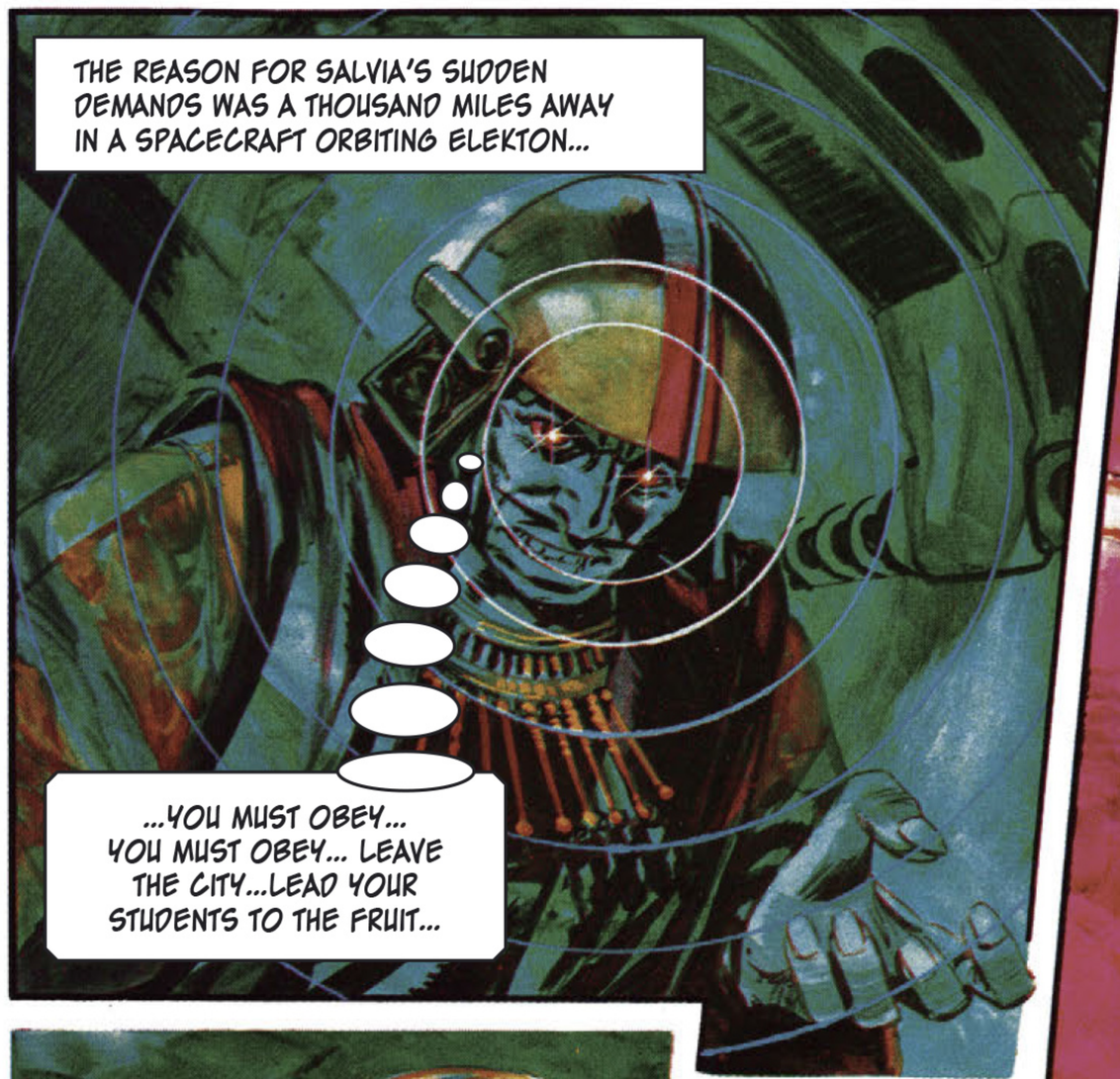

HALF AN HOUR LATER, TRIGO WAS SUMMONED ONCE AGAIN TO THE HOSPITAL, BUT THIS TIME IT WAS TO HEAR AT FIRST HAND THE STORY THAT THE TRIGAN FARMER HAD TO TELL.
SO, THE TYRANT, ZORTH, HAS RETURNED...SURELY AFTER ALL THIS TIME HE DOES NOT STILL DREAM OF CONQUERING OUR LAND...AND THIS FRUIT, CAN THIS BE WHAT OLD PERIC SPOKE OF?

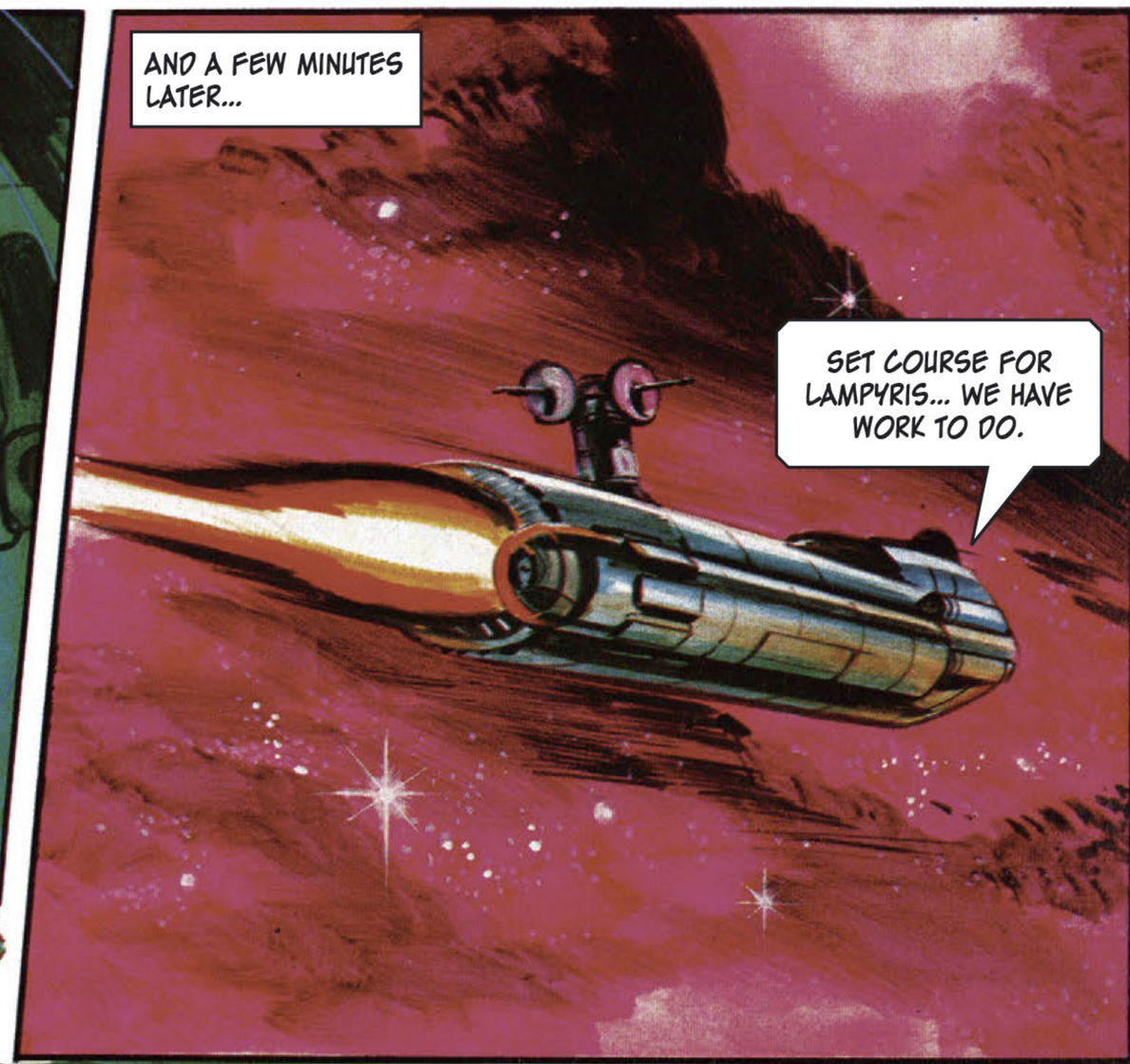
A FEW WORDS WITH THE AGED SCIENTIST WERE SUFFICIENT...
THERE IS NO DOUBT, MY LORD... THESE ARE THE SAME FRUITS OF FORGETFULNESS DESCRIBED IN THE ANCIENT VOLUMES...IT IS THE JUICE FROM THEM THAT HAS POISONED THE MINDS OF OUR YOUTH...
...THROUGH WHOM HE IS PLANNING TO SEIZE OUR CITY...

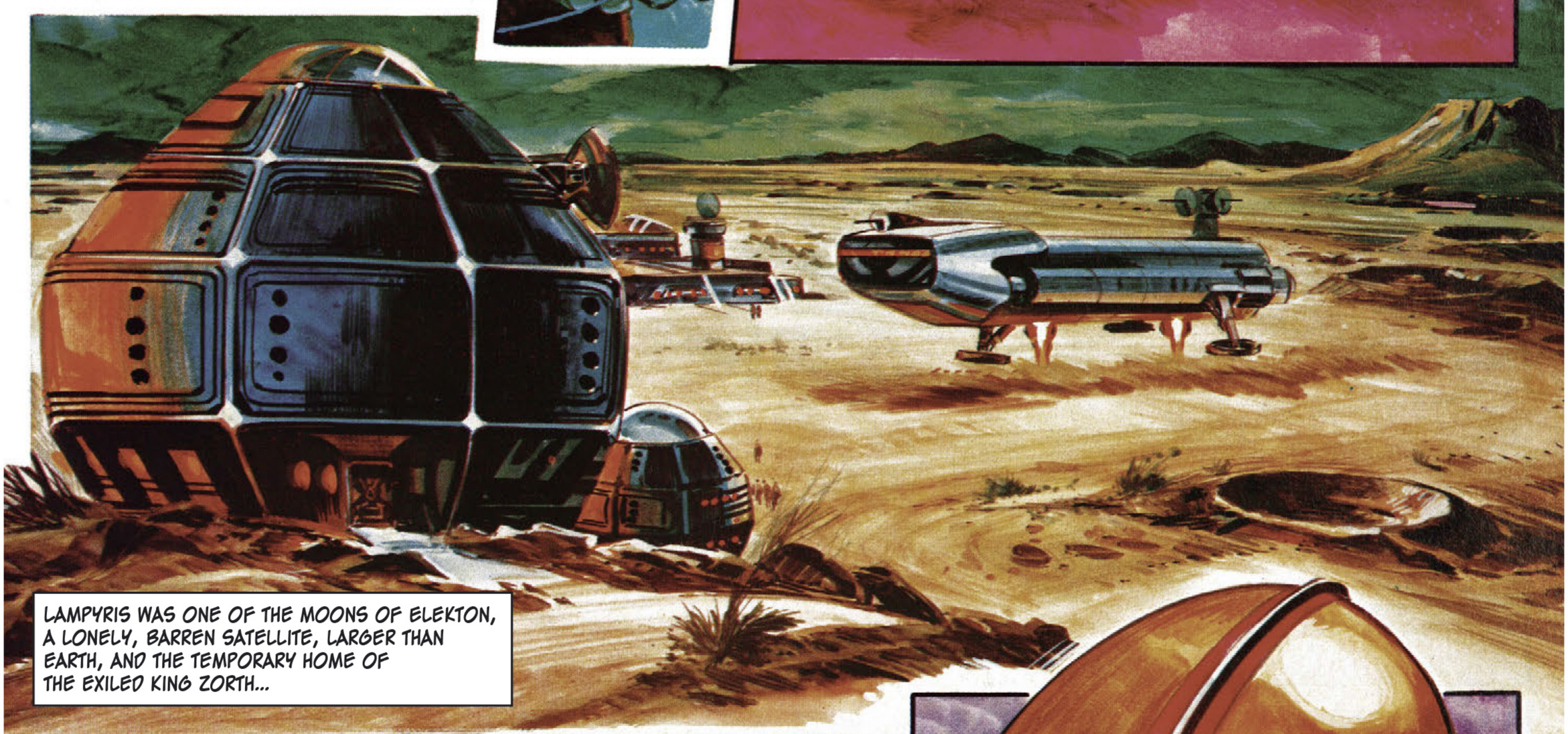
TRIGO'S ANGER WAS TERRIBLE TO BEHOLD!
LET IT BE KNOWN THAT NO ONE SHALL LEAVE THE CITY... LET A GENERAL WARNING BE GIVEN THAT ALL SUCH FRUIT MUST BE DESTROYED, AND LET IT ALSO BE KNOWN THAT FROM THIS DAY WE ARE IN A STATE OF WAR WITH LOKA...

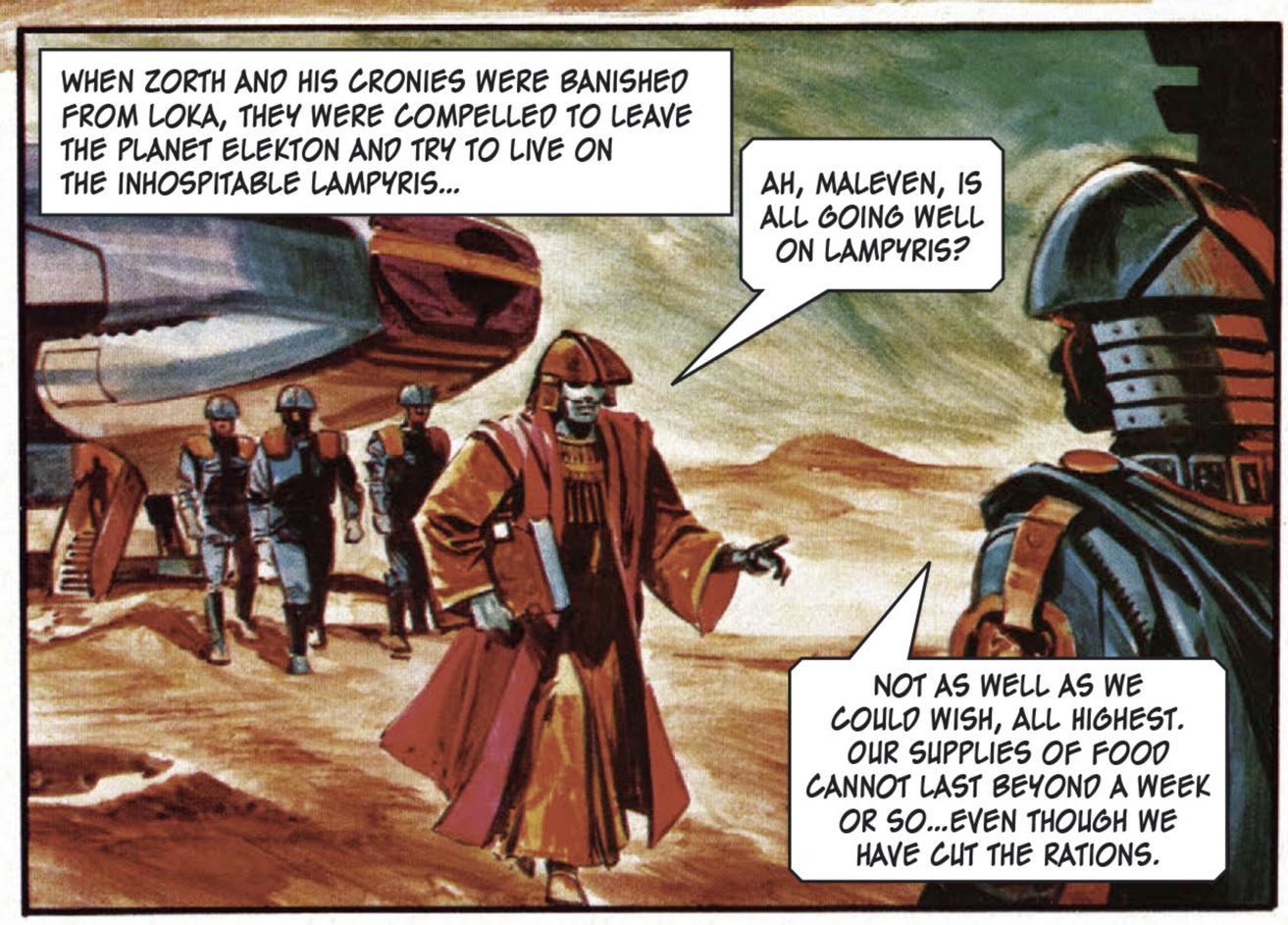
THEY AND THEIR EVIL LEADER MUST BE DESTROYED, I STAKE MY LIFE UPON IT...
YOUR ANGER DOES YOU CREDIT, LORD TRIGO, BUT WE MUST MOVE WITH CAUTION... THE LOKANS HAVE BEEN AT PEACE WITH US FOR MANY YEARS, AND REMEMBER IT WAS THEY WHO BANISHED THE TYRANT ZORTH FROM THEIR MIDST... AND REMEMBER, TOO, THAT HE HOLDS THE SECRET OF THE ANTIDOTE...DESTROY HIM BY FORCE AND WE MAY NEVER RECAPTURE THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF HUNDREDS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE...

ANGRY THOUGH HE WAS WITH THE EXILED KING ZORTH OF LOKA, TRIGO KNEW HE SHOULD HEED OLD PERIC'S WARNING...
WE MUST ACT, BUT ACT WITH CAUTION. TO ATTACK THE LOKANS WITHOUT JUST CAUSE COULD INVOLVE US IN NEEDLESS BLOODSHED.
THARV
LOKA
VORG
CATO
VERY WELL, THEN, WE WILL FIRST DESPATCH AN EMISSARY TO DISCOVER IF THEY ARE GIVING SHELTER TO THEIR EX-KING, AND WHO BETTER THAN BRAG?
MEANWHILE, WE WILL HAVE A SMALL SCOUTING PARTY KEEP WATCH NEAR THE VALLEY WHERE THE FARMER, KAYLOR, FOUND THE FLOWERS AND FRUIT...SOMEHOW, WE MUST FIND FROM WHERE THE TYRANT ZORTH IS PLANNING TO LAUNCH HIS FINAL BLOW.
AND SO, TRIGO'S ORDERS WERE PUT INTO EFFECT AT ONCE...
FARE THEE WELL, BROTHER... TAKE NO CHANCES WITH THE LOKANS...
FEAR NOT, TRIGO... I SHOULD RETURN WITHIN THE COURSE OF TWO MOONS... KEEP WATCH OVER JANNO... HE IS DEAR TO ME.
AS BRAG SET OFF ON HIS MISSION TO LOKA...
LET ALL THE CITY GATES BE CLOSED... AND SEND GUARDS TO SEARCH EVERY CORNER OF EVERY HOUSE FOR THE DEADLY FRUIT...
IN THE HOSPITAL, THE ANTIDOTE GIVEN TO JANNO BEGAN TO TAKE EFFECT...
THANK THE STARS YOU HAVE RECOVERED... NOW, WE MUST TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, AND MY DAUGHTER.
PERIC... I... I'M SORRY... I REMEMBER ONLY THAT I ATE SOME OF THE FRUIT... AFTER THAT MY MEMORY IS A BLANK...
WHILE IN ONE OF THE DETENTION CENTRES WITHIN THE CITY, PERIC'S DAUGHTER, SALVIA, WAS CAUSING A DISTURBANCE...
I DEMAND TO BE RELEASED... YOU MUST LET ME LEAVE AT ONCE...
I CANNOT DEFY LORD TRIGO'S ORDERS...NO ONE MAY LEAVE THE CITY... PLEASE REMAIN CALM, MY LADY...


THE REASON FOR SALVIA'S SUDDEN DEMANDS WAS A THOUSAND MILES AWAY IN A SPACECRAFT ORBITING ELEKTON...
...YOU MUST OBEY... YOU MUST OBEY... LEAVE THE CITY...LEAD YOUR STUDENTS TO THE FRUIT...


AND A FEW MINUTES LATER...
SET COURSE FOR LAMPYRIS... WE HAVE WORK TO DO.

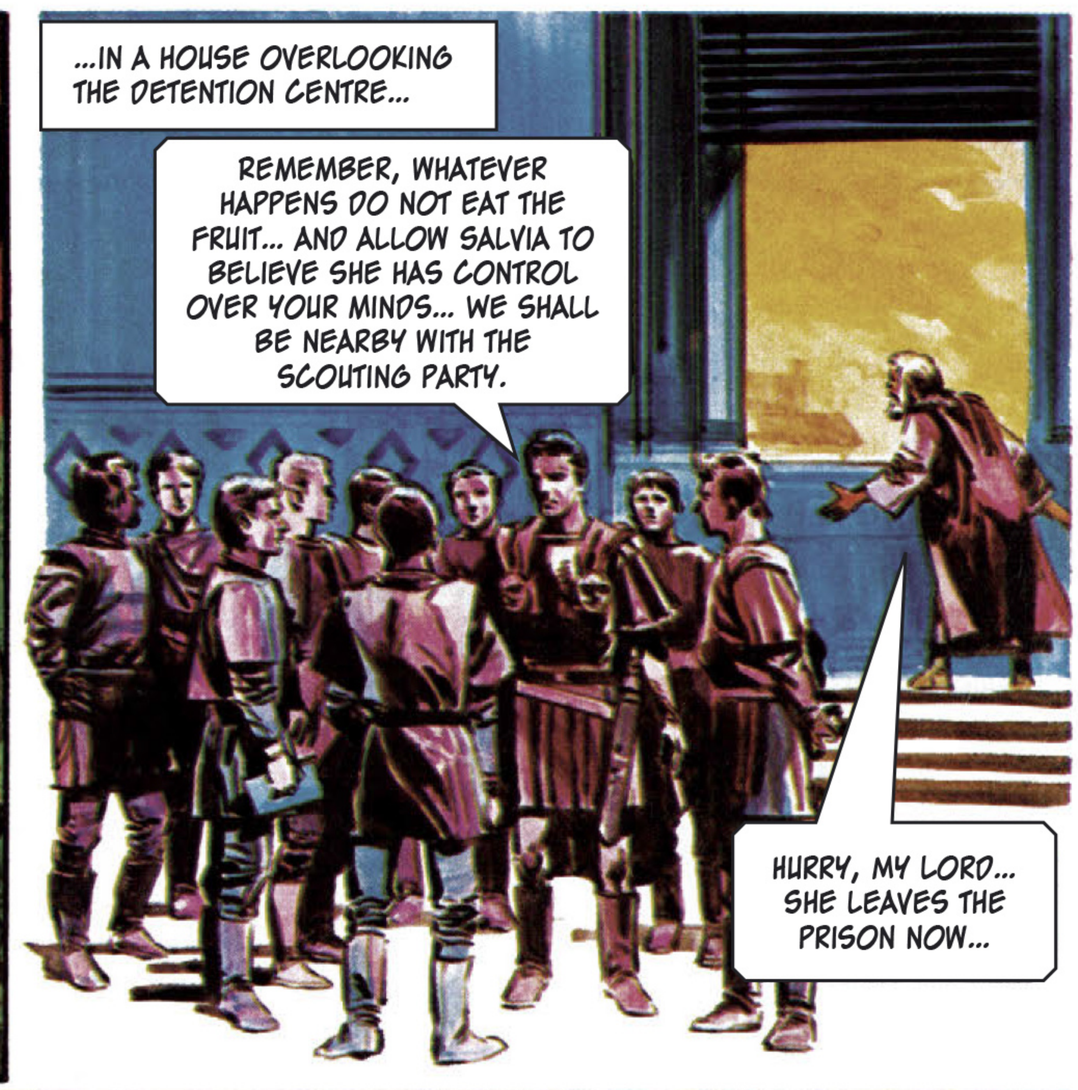

LAMPYRIS WAS ONE OF THE MOONS OF ELEKTON, A LONELY, BARREN SATELLITE, LARGER THAN EARTH, AND THE TEMPORARY HOME OF THE EXILED KING ZORTH...


WHEN ZORTH AND HIS CRONIES WERE BANISHED FROM LOKA, THEY WERE COMPELLED TO LEAVE THE PLANET ELEKTON AND TRY TO LIVE ON THE INHOSPITABLE LAMPYRIS...
AH, MALEVEN, IS ALL GOING WELL ON LAMPYRIS?
NOT AS WELL AS WE COULD WISH, ALL HIGHEST. OUR SUPPLIES OF FOOD CANNOT LAST BEYOND A WEEK OR SO...EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE CUT THE RATIONS.

THEN CUT THEM AGAIN... IF MY PLAN WORKS WE SHALL HAVE FOOD ENOUGH WHEN THE CITY OF TRIGAN FALLS INTO OUR HANDS...

WITH THEIR FOOD STOCKS ALMOST EXHAUSTED ON BARREN MOON, LAMPYRIS, KING ZORTH AND HIS HENCHMAN, MALEVEN, MADE THEIR PLANS...
SEE THAT ALL THE HEAT GUNS WE POSSESS ARE FULLY CHARGED AND PUT ABOARD. WE LEAVE FOR ELEKTON IN THREE DAYS.
VERY WELL, ALL HIGHEST, BUT WE HAVE MANY MORE WEAPONS THAN MEN.
YOU FORGET, MALEVEN... I SHALL HAVE A THOUSAND YOUNG TRIGANS OBEYING MY WILL WHEN WE ARE READY...AND WHILE I HOLD THIS BOOK THAT ARROGANT FOOL TRIGO IS POWERLESS TO PREVENT THEM SERVING MY PURPOSE.
MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE PLANET ELEKTON, OLD PERIC SOUGHT AN AUDIENCE WITH HIS LEADER, TRIGO...
I HAVE HEARD THAT MY DAUGHTER, SALVIA, IS CAUSING TROUBLE FOR HER GUARDS...SHE IS BEING RESTRAINED, BUT I FEAR FOR HER SANITY IF SHE DOES NOT SOON REGAIN HER FREEDOM...
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL, OLD FRIEND... BUT WHAT ARE WE TO DO?
I HAVE A SUGGESTION, MY LORD...LET US INSTRUCT A GOODLY NUMBER OF OUR YOUNG STUDENTS - THOSE WE KNOW CAN BE TRUSTED NOT TO EAT THE DEADLY FRUIT - AND LET SALVIA LEAD THEM OUT OF THE CITY...
WHILE THEY REMAIN UNINFECTED WE CAN DEAL WITH ZORTH SHOULD HE TRY TO CONTACT THEM...EXCELLENT, PERIC. NOT FOR NOTHING DO THEY CALL YOU WISE, MY OLD FRIEND...
BUT LET US FIRST WAIT FOR TWO DAYS WHILE JANNO RECOVERS HIS STRENGTH... THEN HE, TOO, CAN TAKE PART IN THE DECEPTION...

AND SO, WHILE IT WAS ARRANGED FOR SALVIA TO ESCAPE...
I MUST OBEY THE WILL OF ZORTH...


...IN A HOUSE OVERLOOKING THE DETENTION CENTRE...
REMEMBER, WHATEVER HAPPENS DO NOT EAT THE FRUIT... AND ALLOW SALVIA TO BELIEVE SHE HAS CONTROL OVER YOUR MINDS... WE SHALL BE NEARBY WITH THE SCOUTING PARTY.
HURRY, MY LORD... SHE LEAVES THE PRISON NOW...

AND SO, A FEW MINUTES LATER, A BOLT WAS SLIPPED FROM ONE OF THE SMALL CITY GATES FROM WHICH THE GUARDS HAD BEEN REMOVED...

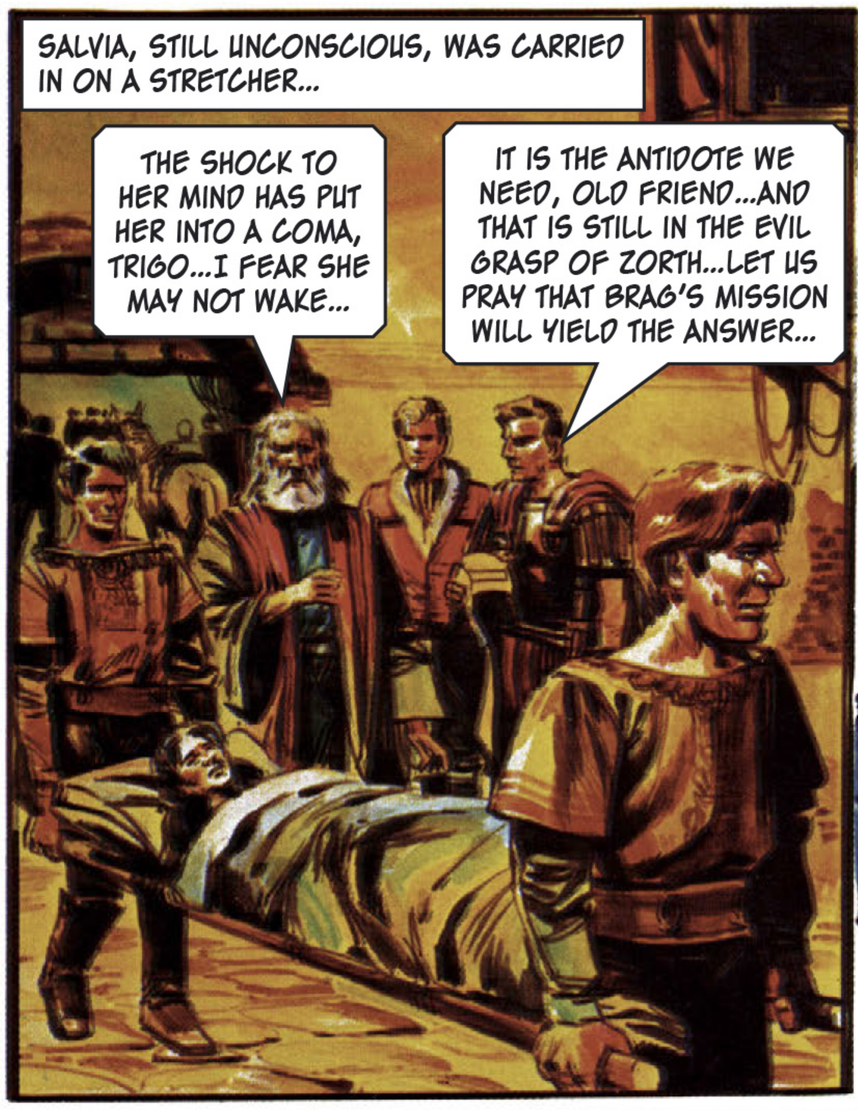
SALVIA LED THE STUDENTS TO WHERE JANNO HAD WAITED MANY TIMES BEFORE... BUT THIS TIME IT WAS DIFFERENT...
HERE SHE COMES... I MUST BE WARY OF HER... ONE SLIP AND THE PLAN WILL FAIL...

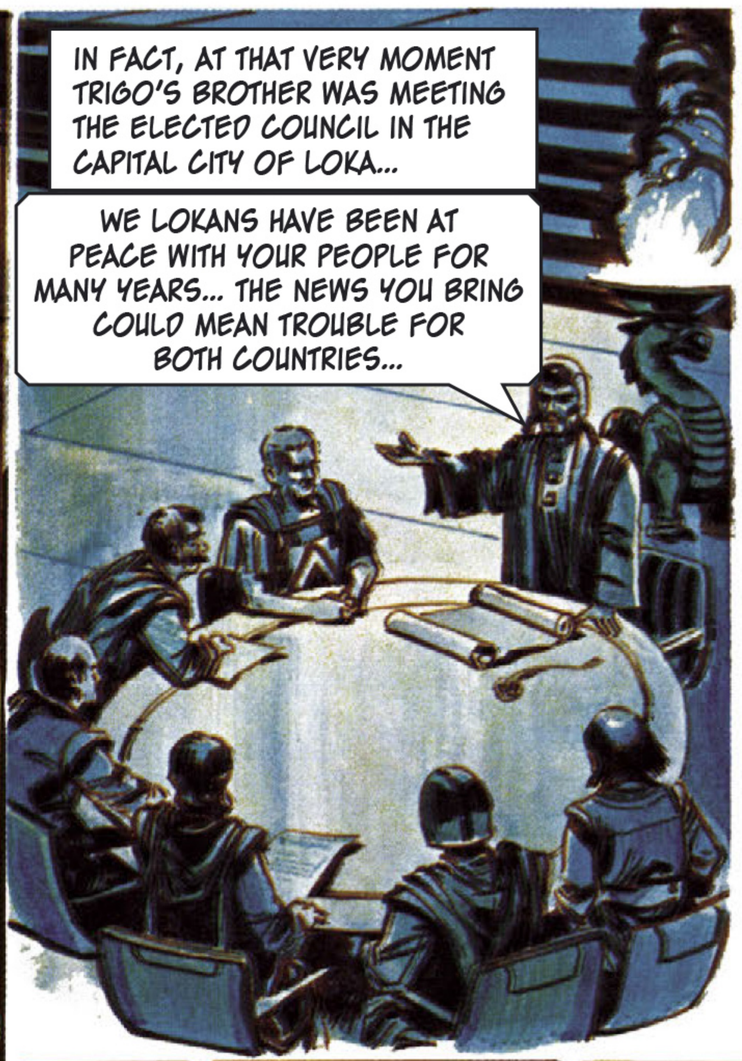
UNAWARE OF TRIGO'S PLANS, ZORTH PREPARED TO LAUNCH HIS DESPERATE GAMBLE FROM THE MOON LAMPYRIS...
ALL WILL BE READY IN ONE HOUR.
GOOD... BY THIS HOUR TOMORROW WE SHALL BE READY TO STORM THE TRIGAN CITY - AND IT AMUSES ME TO THINK WE SHALL USE YOUNG TRIGANS TO DO IT...

THEIR SPACESHIP FULLY LOADED WITH EXTRA WEAPONS WHICH WERE DESTINED FOR THE YOUNG TRIGANS, THE FEW LOKANS ABANDONED THEIR BASE ON THE MOON LAMPYRIS.
...IT WAS ABOUT THIS TIME THAT JANNO BROUGHT HIS TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT TO REST ON THE PLAIN BEYOND TRIGAN CITY...
DON'T FORGET... YOU ARE UNARMED, SO IF THE LOKANS APPEAR DO NOT RESIST, BUT WAIT FOR TRIGO'S MEN...
WHILE THE STUDENTS MADE A PRETENCE AT EATING THE FRUIT, JANNO DISTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF OLD PERIC'S DAUGHTER...
IT WAS FROM TWENTY POINTS EAST OF THE SECOND SUN THAT OUR MASTER, ZORTH, CAME BEFORE...
IN FACT, THE LOKAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WERE AT THAT VERY INSTANT DESCENDING TOWARDS ELEKTON...
AND NOT LONG AFTERWARDS...
ZORTH, OUR MASTER IS NEAR... HE ORDERS US TO APPROACH THE MACHINES...
I HEAR YOU...

PLAYING THEIR PARTS WELL, THE STUDENTS PUT ON BLANK FACES AND ACCEPTED THE HEAT GUNS...
DISTRIBUTE THE WEAPONS...
YOU WILL TRAVEL WITH US TO OUR CAMP ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE PLAIN. THERE WE SHALL WAIT TILL SALVIA BRINGS OTHERS TO JOIN US...
THIS WAS A DEVELOPMENT THAT JANNO HAD NOT BARGAINED FOR...DESPERATELY HE GLANCED TOWARDS WHERE HE KNEW TRIGO AND HIS MEN WERE KEEPING WATCH... AND THEN...
...YOU YOUNG FOOL... WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE VALLEY TRIGO REACTED QUICKLY...
BY THE STARS... JANNO HAS OPENED FIRE... SOMETHING MUST HAVE GONE WRONG!... WE MUST MOVE QUICKLY...
BUT THE THUNDER OF THE KREED'S HOOVES REACHED THE EARS OF ZORTH...
BY THE POWERS OF DARKNESS... IT IS TRIGO HIMSELF... SO MUCH THE BETTER... OPEN FIRE!!!
BUT THE TRIGAN STUDENTS HAD NO INTENTION OF OPENING FIRE...AT LEAST, NOT AT THEIR OWN LEADER!
...AND SUDDENLY THE WHOLE VALLEY WAS A SEA OF FLAME...

THANKS TO JANNO'S WARNING, AND THE QUICK REACTION OF THE YOUNG TRIGAN STUDENTS, FEW OF THE LIGHTLY ARMED TRIGAN SCOUTS WERE HARMED...
WHAT TREACHERY IS THIS? THE FRUIT CANNOT HAVE FAILED... AND THEY DO NOT HAVE THE ANTIDOTE...
WE MUST RETURN TO THE SPACESHIP... OR WE SHALL BE DESTROYED...!
SEEING THE BATTLE ALMOST WON, TRIGO TURNED HIS ATTENTION TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE MOST DEAR TO HIM – HIS NEPHEW, AND PERIC'S DAUGHTER...
JANNO, SALVIA... ARE YOU INJURED...?
I AM WELL, UNCLE... SALVIA IS UNHURT, BUT I FEAR THE SHOCK HAS RENDERED HER SENSELESS.
ZORTH GRASPED HIS OPPORTUNITY, LEAPT INTO HIS SPACESHIP AND SOARED QUICKLY AWAY TO SAFETY...
TRY TO SHOOT THEM DOWN...
I FEAR THEY ARE OUT OF RANGE, MY LORD...
WHEN THE LOKAN CRAFT HAD DISAPPEARED, TRIGO GAVE AN ORDER...
DESTROY THEM ALL...
AND A FEW HOURS LATER A DISAPPOINTED TRIGO RETURNED TO TRIGAN CITY...
WE HAVE DONE WELL, MY WARRIORS...BUT NOT YET WELL ENOUGH...HUNDREDS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE REMAIN AFFECTED BY THE SICKNESS, AND THE EVIL ZORTH HOLDS THE SECRET OF THE ANTIDOTE...

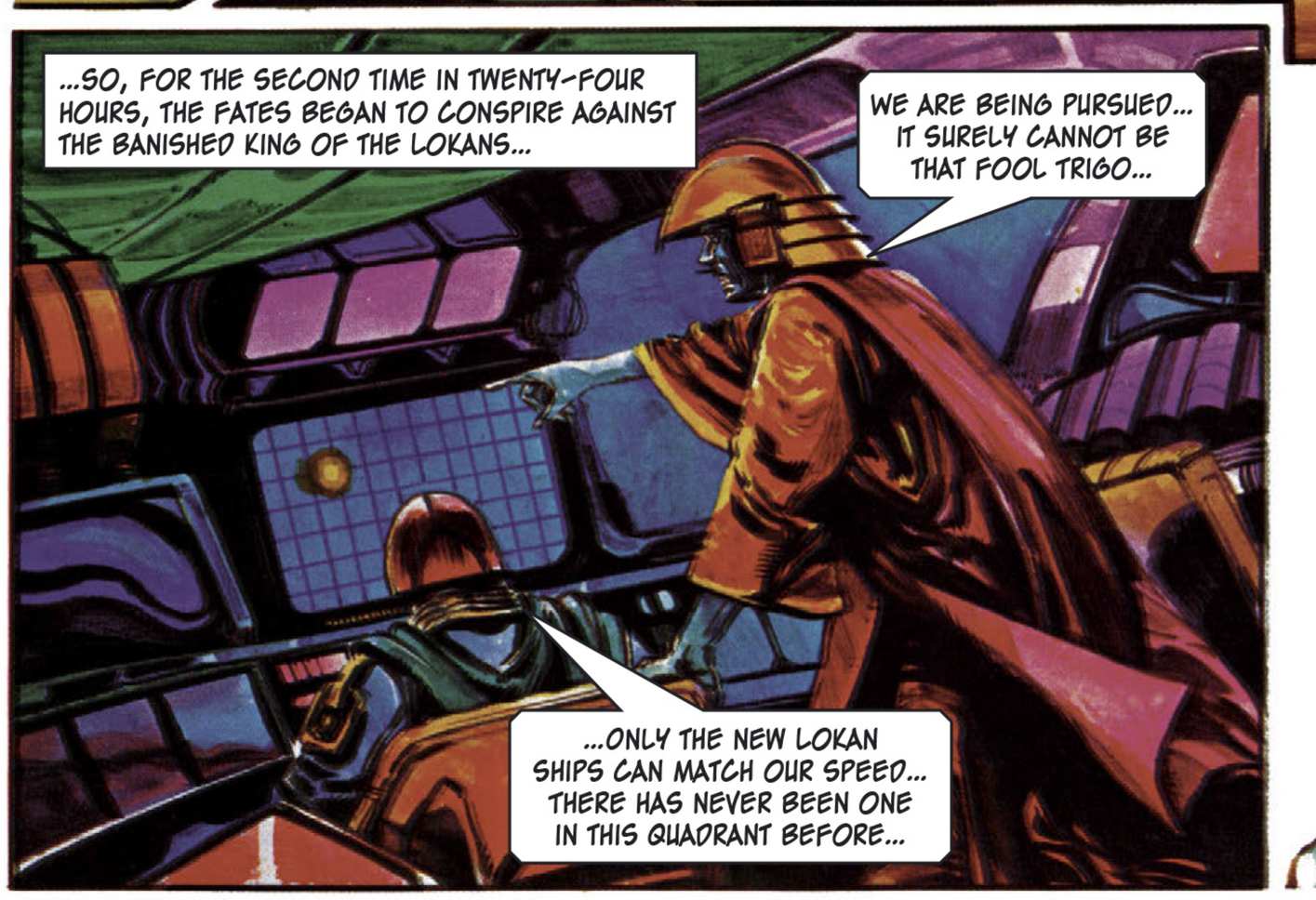

SALVIA, STILL UNCONSCIOUS, WAS CARRIED IN ON A STRETCHER...
THE SHOCK TO HER MIND HAS PUT HER INTO A COMA, TRIGO...I FEAR SHE MAY NOT WAKE...
IT IS THE ANTIDOTE WE NEED, OLD FRIEND...AND THAT IS STILL IN THE EVIL GRASP OF ZORTH...LET US PRAY THAT BRAG'S MISSION WILL YIELD THE ANSWER...


IN FACT, AT THAT VERY MOMENT TRIGO'S BROTHER WAS MEETING THE ELECTED COUNCIL IN THE CAPITAL CITY OF LOKA...
WE LOKANS HAVE BEEN AT PEACE WITH YOUR PEOPLE FOR MANY YEARS... THE NEWS YOU BRING COULD MEAN TROUBLE FOR BOTH COUNTRIES...

ZORTH WAS A TYRANT... A MONSTER DRUNK WITH POWER... WE HAVE NO WISH TO SEE HIM RETURN...YOU MUST JOURNEY TO THE MOON LAMPYRIS IN ONE OF OUR SPACE BATTLE CRUISERS. IT WAS TO THERE HE WAS BANISHED.

THAT SAME DAY A HEAVILY ARMED LOKAN SPACE CRUISER BLASTED OFF WITH BRAG AS A PASSENGER...

AND ALMOST WITHIN MINUTES OF IT REACHING ESCAPE VELOCITY...
COMPUTE SPEED AND COURSE... SOUND ALL DECKS ALERT...PREPARE LIGHT BEAM PROJECTORS...
THERE IS ANOTHER SPACECRAFT CLOSE TO OUR ORBIT, COMMANDER...


...SO, FOR THE SECOND TIME IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, THE FATES BEGAN TO CONSPIRE AGAINST THE BANISHED KING OF THE LOKANS...
WE ARE BEING PURSUED... IT SURELY CANNOT BE THAT FOOL TRIGO...
...ONLY THE NEW LOKAN SHIPS CAN MATCH OUR SPEED... THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ONE IN THIS QUADRANT BEFORE...

THEN WE MUST MAKE CERTAIN IT WILL NOT BE IN THIS QUADRANT AGAIN... CHANGE COURSE TO INTERCEPT...

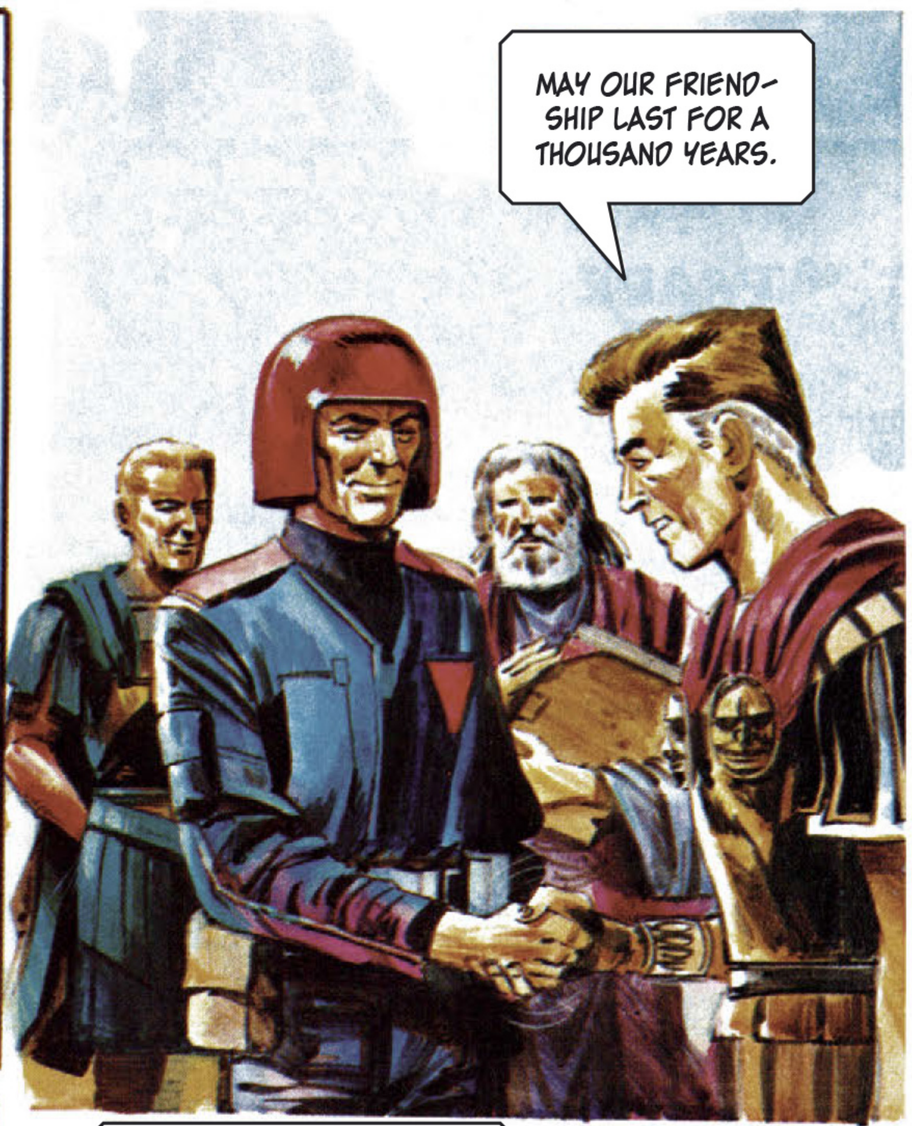
ON BOARD THE LOKAN SPACE BATTLE CRUISER, TRIGO'S BROTHER, BRAG, STUDIED THE VIDEO SCREEN WITH THE FRIENDLY LOKAN COSMONAUTS.
BY ALL THE PLANETS! THAT IS ONE OF OUR EARLY SPACE CRUISERS... WE HAD A FLEET OF THEM WHEN THE TYRANT ZORTH RULED US.
THEN IT MUST BE THE EVILDOER HIMSELF... WE MUST PURSUE HIM...!
BUT EVEN AS HE SPOKE, BRAG FELT THE MIGHTY LOKAN SPACE BATTLE CRUISER GIVE A SUDDEN LURCH.
AYEE... ZORTH NEVER RAN FROM A FIGHT... PREPARE TO OPEN FIRE!
AIM TO CRIPPLE NOT DESTROY... HE HAS SOMETHING ON BOARD WE NEED.

WHAT BRAG WAS REFERRING TO WAS THE MISSING VOLUME OF THE HISTORY OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE CONTAINING THE FORMULA FOR THE ANTIDOTE TO THE POISON FROM THE FRUIT OF FORGETFULNESS.
FOR WHAT SEEMED AN AGE, THE TWO MASSIVE SPACESHIPS WHEELED THROUGH THE EMPTY EERIE SILENCE OF THE VOID.
INCREASE HEATSHIELD POWER TO MAXIMUM...
INSIDE THE LOKAN CRAFT, BRAG WATCHED THE PROGRESS OF THE BATTLE WITH INCREASING TENSION.
THEN WE MUST CRIPPLE HIM QUICKLY. CONCENTRATE YOUR LIGHT BEAMS ON HIS MAIN ENGINES...
HE MUST BREAK OFF SOON TO RECHARGE HIS HEAT GUNS...

WITH A BRILLIANT FINAL MANOEUVRE, THE LOKAN BATTLE CRUISER'S LIGHT GUNS SCORED A DIRECT HIT.
ON BOARD THE CRIPPLED SPACESHIP ZORTH'S SURVIVAL INSTINCT BEGAN TO CONTROL HIS ACTIONS.
WE'VE LOST ALL MAIN POWER, ALL HIGHEST... AND OUR HEAT GUNS ARE USELESS AGAINST THAT VESSEL...
FOOLS... IDIOTS... WE SHOULD HAVE BROKEN OFF THE BATTLE EARLIER...
A FEW MINUTES LATER...
STEER FOR THE ENGINE ROOM AIRLOCK...
ON BOARD ZORTH'S SPACECRAFT THE HUM OF THE MAIN ENGINES SUDDENLY CEASED.
A THOUSAND CURSES ON THEM... BUT I'M NOT GOING TO BE TAKEN PRISONER BY MY OWN PEOPLE... THEY HAVE LONG MEMORIES... PREPARE THE ESCAPE CAPSULES... HURRY!
...ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE SPACESHIP...
AND AS BRAG AND THE FRIENDLY LOKANS BEGAN TO PENETRATE THE DAMAGED AIRLOCK OF ZORTH'S SPACESHIP...
MOVE CAREFULLY, THEY ARE BOUND TO PUT UP A FIGHT...

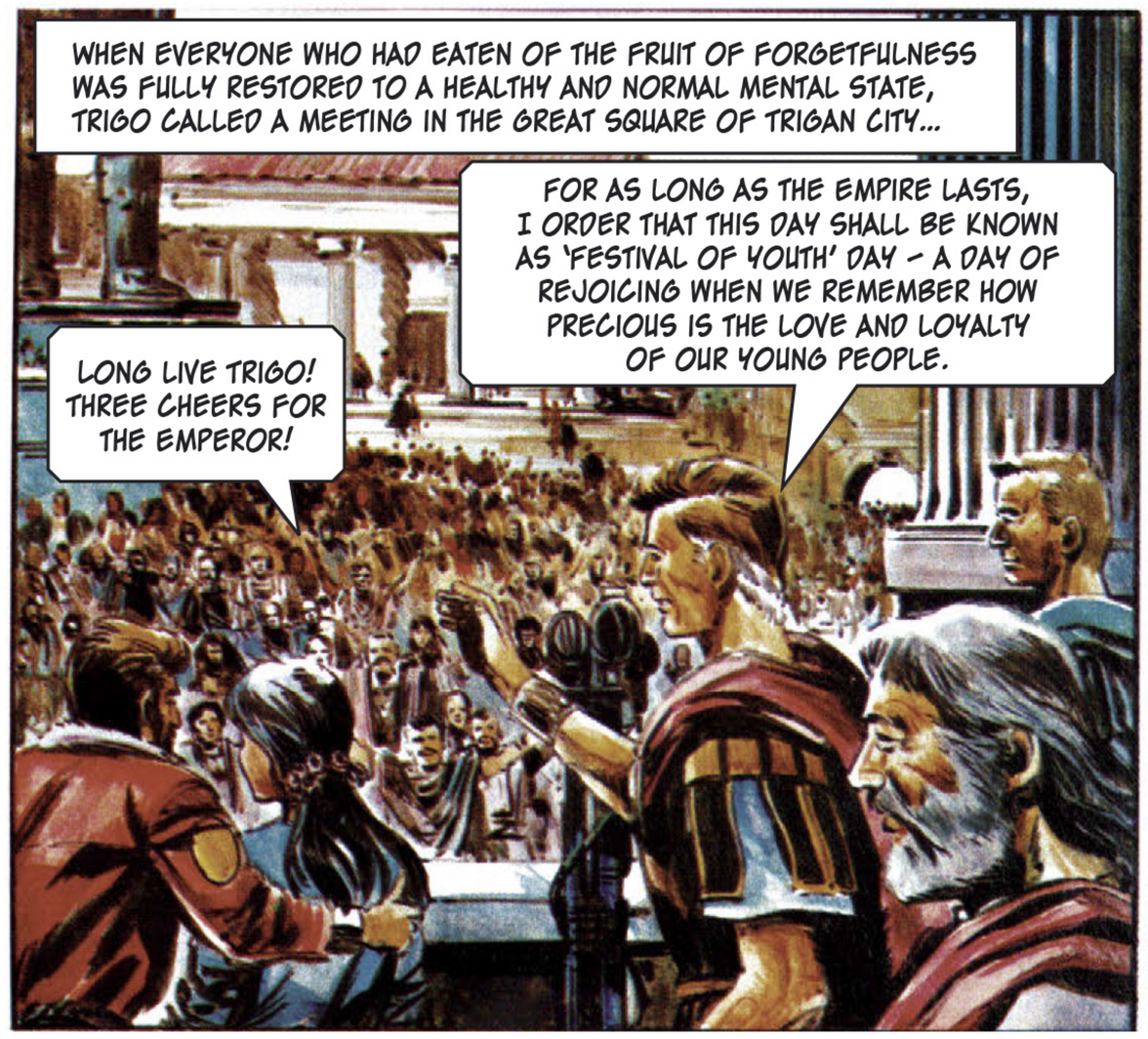
AS BRAG AND THE FRIENDLY LOKANS ENTERED THE DAMAGED SPACESHIP, THEY DID NOT KNOW THAT ZORTH AND HIS FIRST LIEUTENANT, MALEVEN, HAD ESCAPED FROM AN AIRLOCK ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE VESSEL...
WE MUST GET INTO THE SHIP... THROUGH THE AIRLOCK OVER HERE.
CAREFUL, SIR... THE MAIN ENGINES HAVE STOPPED, BUT I THINK I FELT THE SHIP MOVE...
MINUTES LATER, BRAG AND THE OTHERS REACHED THE BRIDGE AND MAIN CONTROL DECKS...
WHERE ARE THEY? THE WHOLE SHIP IS DESERTED!
OVER HERE, SIR... QUICKLY!
THAT'S WHY I FELT THE SHIP VIBRATE...THEY WERE EJECTING IN THE ESCAPE CAPSULES.
SHALL I ORDER PURSUIT?
NO... THEY HAVE GOT TOO GOOD A START... OUR FIRST TASK IS TO FIND THE MISSING BOOK WITH THE ANTIDOTE FORMULA... IN THEIR HASTE TO ESCAPE THEY MIGHT HAVE LEFT IT BEHIND...
THIS MAN LIVES, COMMANDER... BUT ONLY JUST...
AND BRAG WAS RIGHT...
...I... I HEARD YOU ASK ABOUT THE BOOK... YOU WILL FIND IT IN THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN... UUUUH!

BRAG RETURNED IN TRIUMPH WITH THE LOKANS IN ONE OF THEIR OWN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...
BLESSINGS UPON YOU, MY BROTHER... YOU HAVE DONE WELL... IT MATTERS LITTLE THAT ZORTH ELUDED US. WE DO NOT FEAR HIM NOW.
WE OWE MUCH TO THE LOKANS WHO HELPED US, TRIGO.


MAY OUR FRIEND-SHIP LAST FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.

THAT VERY DAY, PERIC PREPARED HIS LABORATORY TO PRODUCE A LARGE SUPPLY OF THE ANTIDOTE...
THE FORMULA ALLOWS THE ANTIDOTE TO BE TAKEN BY MOUTH... WE SHALL BE ABLE TO GIVE IT TO THEM IN THEIR DRINKING WATER...
WORK FAST, OLD FRIEND... IT WILL BE GOOD TO HAVE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WELL AGAIN... AND ESPECIALLY YOUR DAUGHTER.

AND SO, OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS...


WHEN EVERYONE WHO HAD EATEN OF THE FRUIT OF FORGETFULNESS WAS FULLY RESTORED TO A HEALTHY AND NORMAL MENTAL STATE, TRIGO CALLED A MEETING IN THE GREAT SQUARE OF TRIGAN CITY...
FOR AS LONG AS THE EMPIRE LASTS, I ORDER THAT THIS DAY SHALL BE KNOWN AS 'FESTIVAL OF YOUTH' DAY – A DAY OF REJOICING WHEN WE REMEMBER HOW PRECIOUS IS THE LOVE AND LOYALTY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.
LONG LIVE TRIGO! THREE CHEERS FOR THE EMPEROR!

LXXVII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

CIVIL WAR IN DAVELI

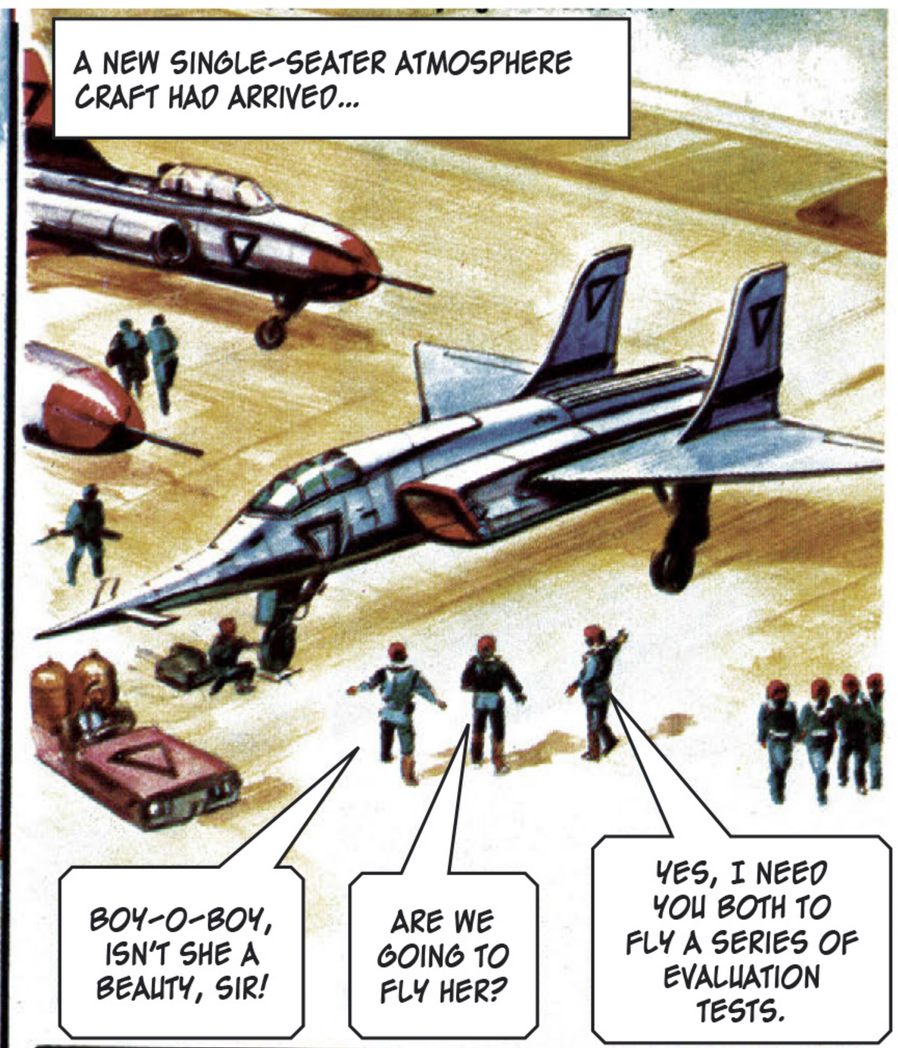
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 898 - 911

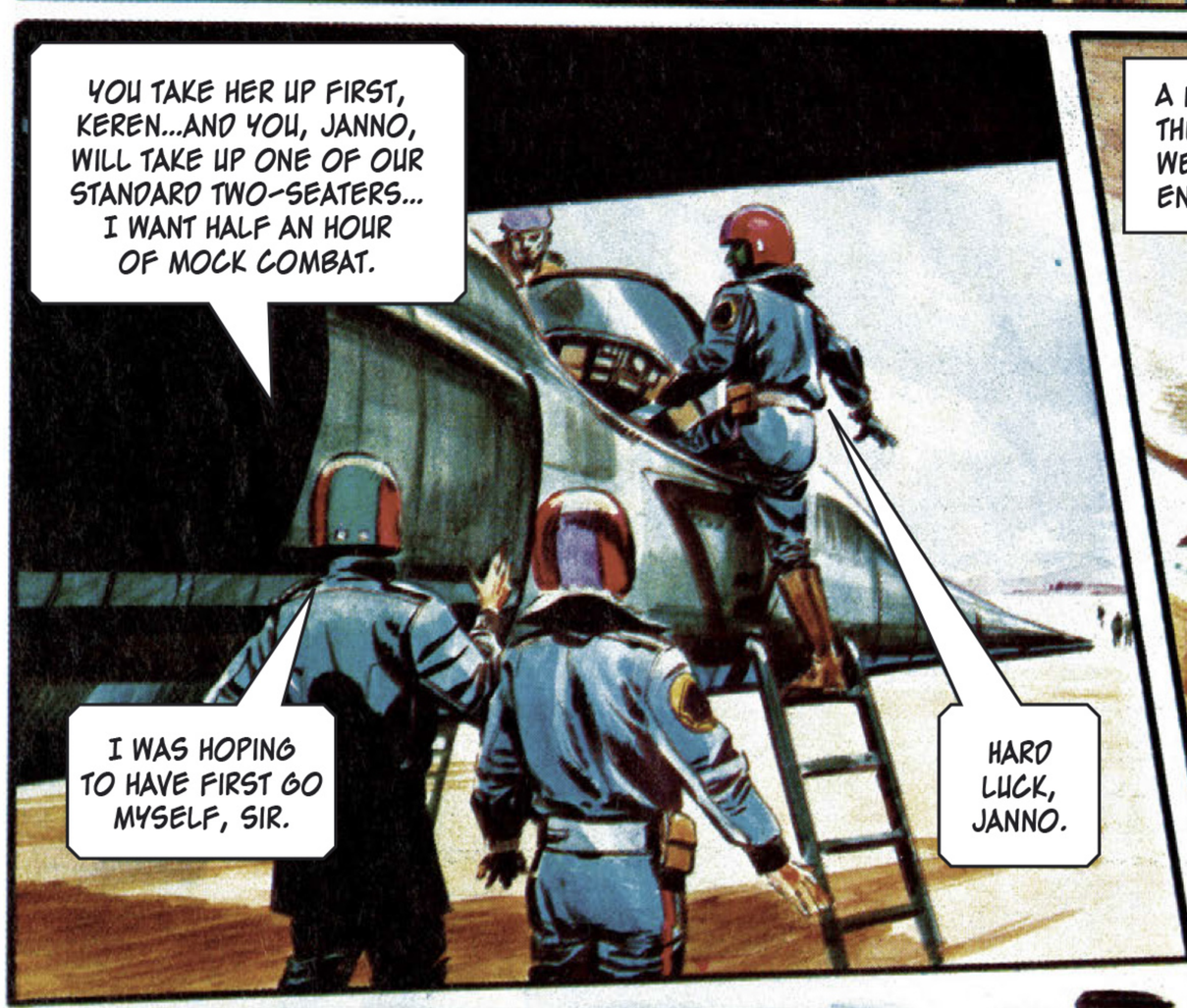
7th April – 7th July 1979

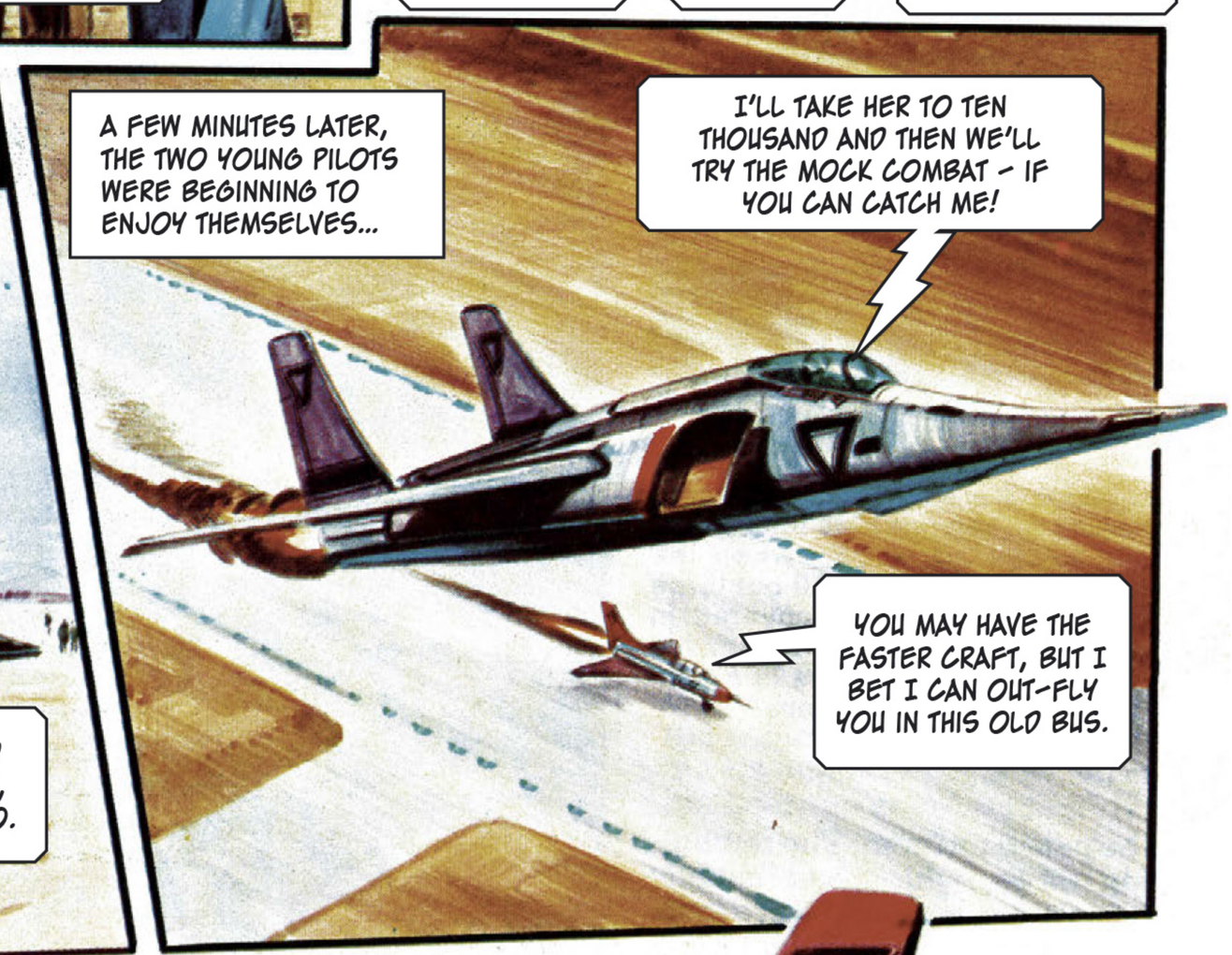
Story by Ken Roscoe

Art by Gerry Wood

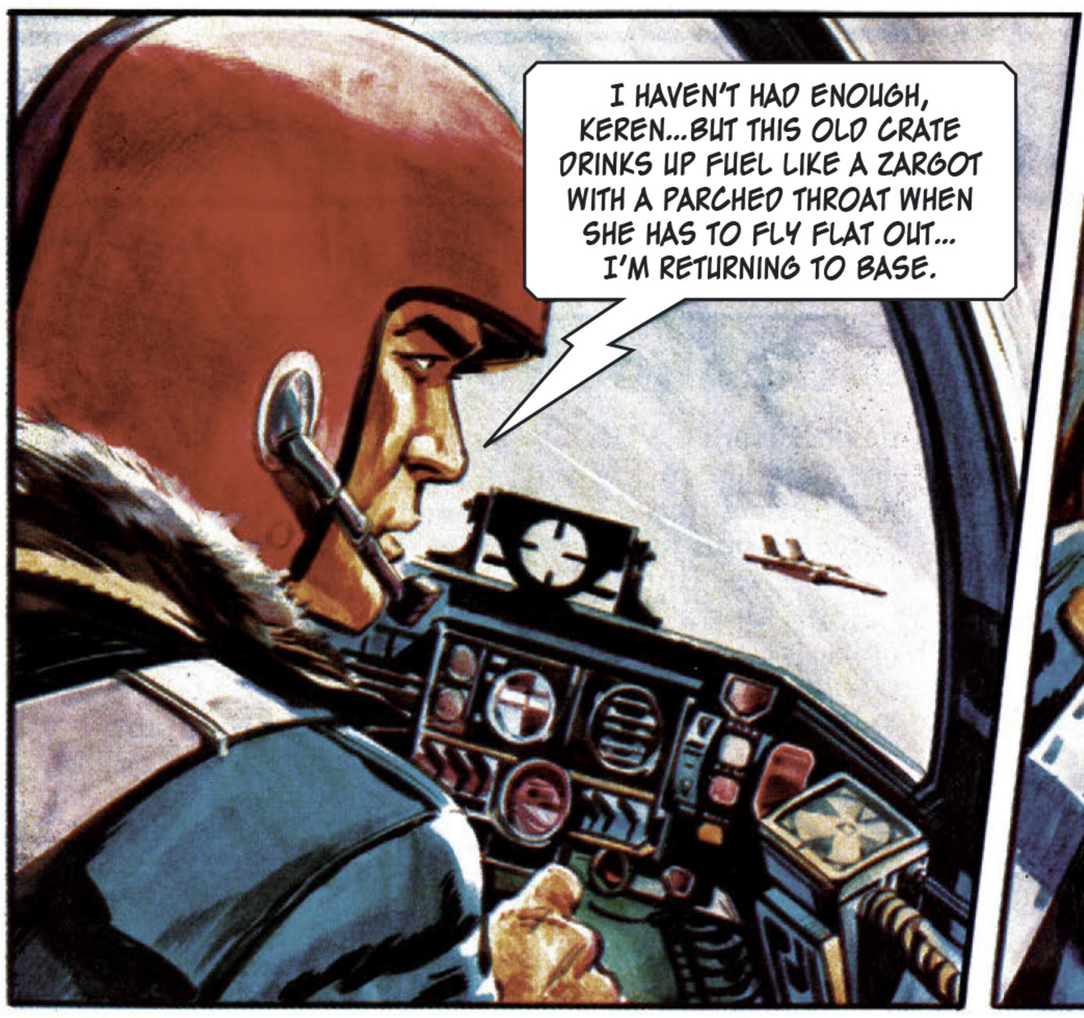
FLIGHT COMMANDER ALATUS, CHIEF INSTRUCTOR OF THE TRIGAN AIR FORCE, TOOK THE MORNING PARADE.
JANNO, KEREN – FALL OUT. I HAVE A SPECIAL TASK FOR YOU.


A NEW SINGLE-SEATER ATMOSPHERE CRAFT HAD ARRIVED...
BOY-O-BOY, ISN'T SHE A BEAUTY, SIR!
ARE WE GOING TO FLY HER?
YES, I NEED YOU BOTH TO FLY A SERIES OF EVALUATION TESTS.


YOU TAKE HER UP FIRST, KEREN...AND YOU, JANNO, WILL TAKE UP ONE OF OUR STANDARD TWO-SEATERS... I WANT HALF AN HOUR OF MOCK COMBAT.
I WAS HOPING TO HAVE FIRST GO MYSELF, SIR.
HARD LUCK, JANNO.

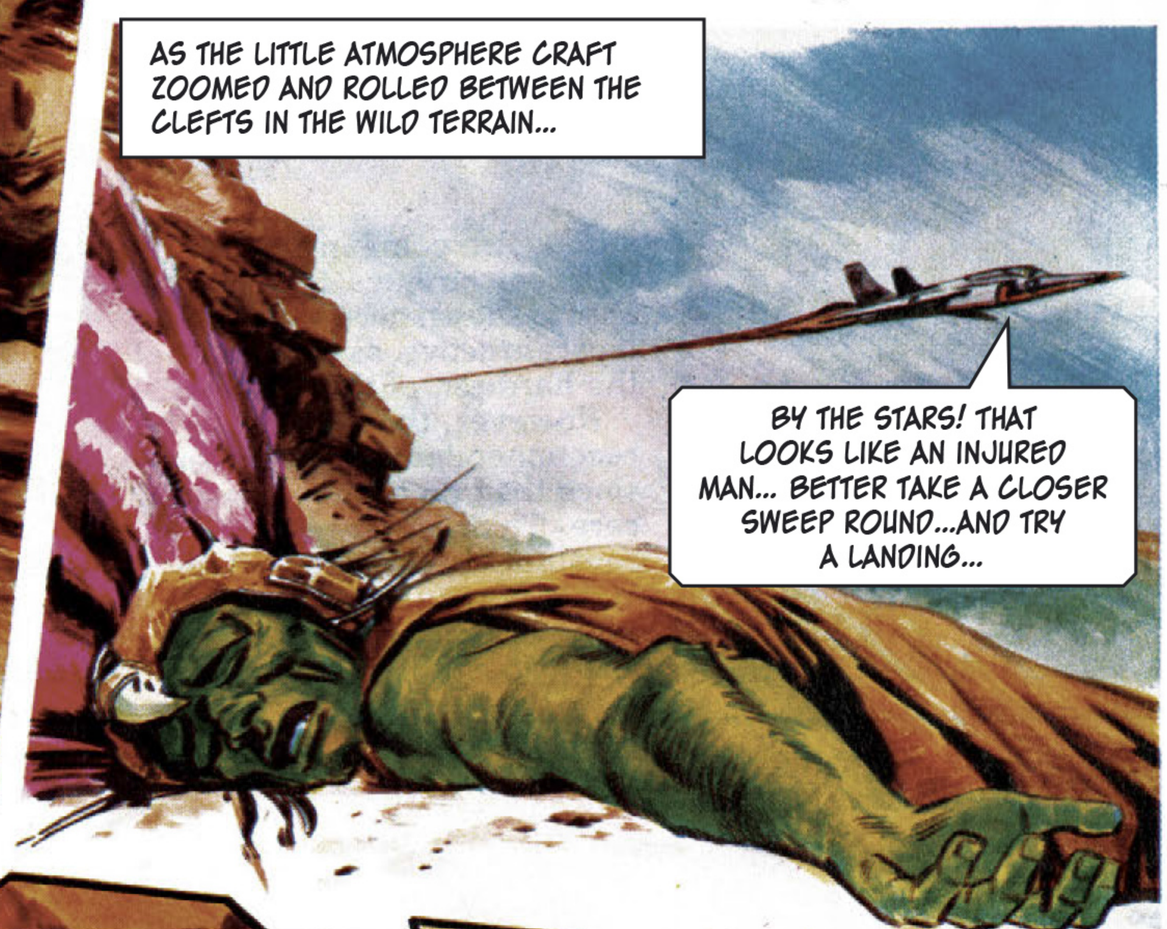

A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE TWO YOUNG PILOTS WERE BEGINNING TO ENJOY THEMSELVES...
I'LL TAKE HER TO TEN THOUSAND AND THEN WE'LL TRY THE MOCK COMBAT – IF YOU CAN CATCH ME!
YOU MAY HAVE THE FASTER CRAFT, BUT I BET I CAN OUT-FLY YOU IN THIS OLD BUS.

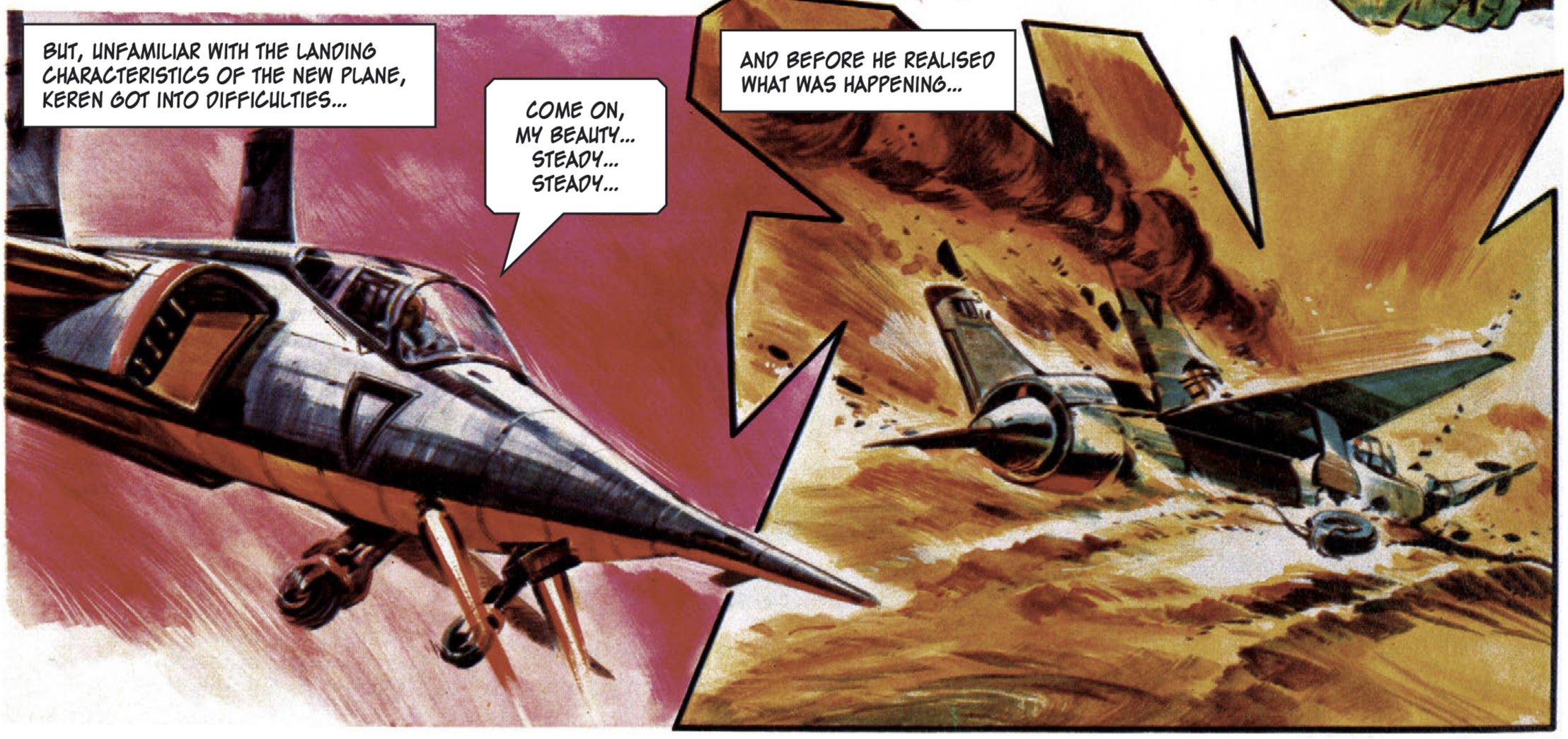
FOR HALF AN HOUR THEY CAVORTED AROUND THE ELEKTON SKY LIKE OUTSIZE FIREFLIES...
SHE HANDLES LIKE A DREAM, JANNO. HAD ENOUGH YET?

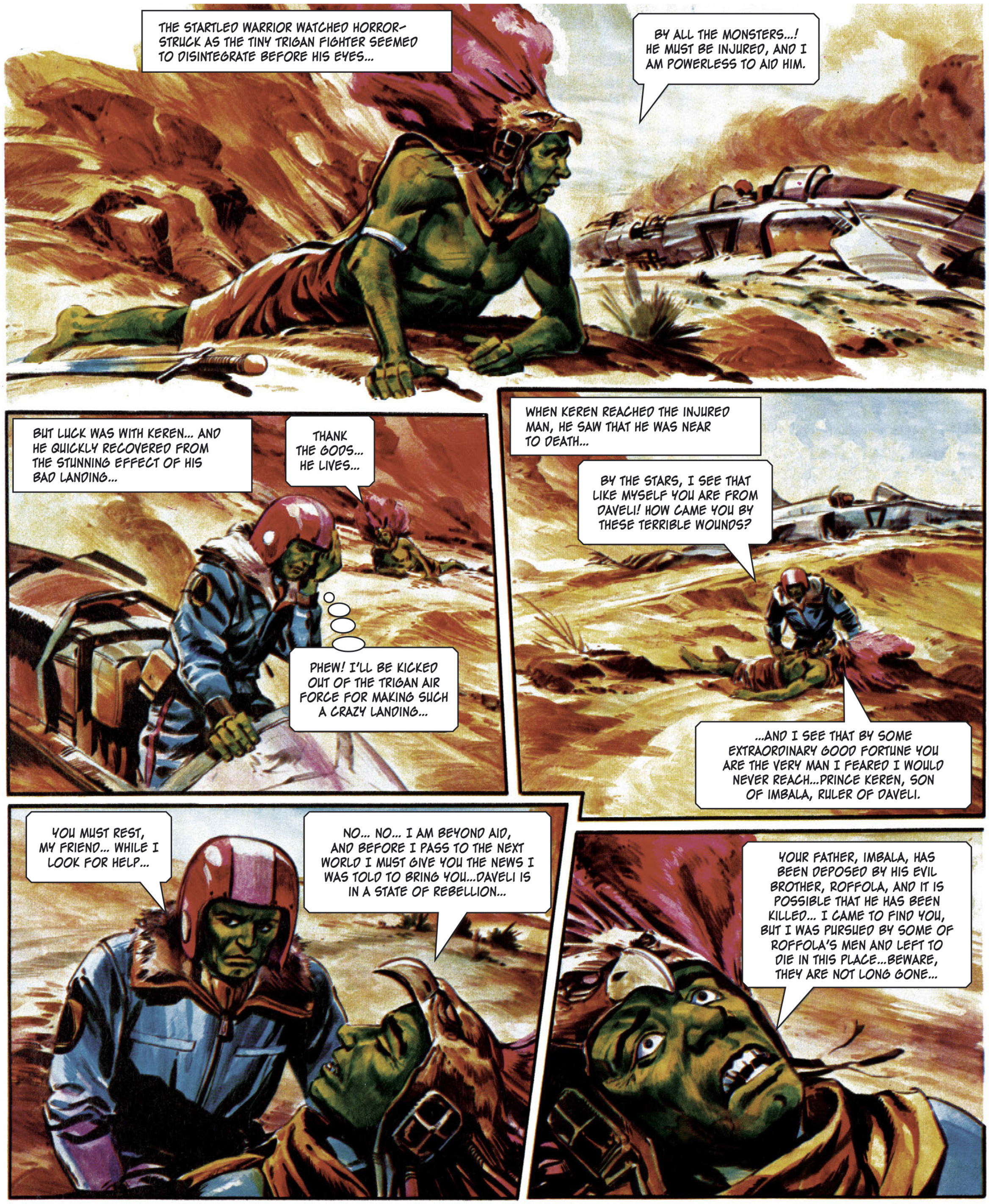

I HAVEN'T HAD ENOUGH, KEREN...BUT THIS OLD CRATE DRINKS UP FUEL LIKE A ZARGOT WITH A PARCHED THROAT WHEN SHE HAS TO FLY FLAT OUT... I'M RETURNING TO BASE.

AND SO WHILE JANNO LANDED IN ORDER TO REFUEL...
UNDERSTOOD, JANNO. THIS LITTLE JOB STILL HAS HALF A TANK, SO I'LL TAKE HER FOR A LITTLE JOYRIDE.

HIS YOUNG FRIEND HEADED EAST TOWARDS THE ROCKY VALLEYS THAT SEPARATED THE COUNTRY OF VORG FROM KEREN'S HOMELAND OF DAVELI...
I'LL TRY HER AT LOW ALTITUDE...


AS THE LITTLE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT ZOOMED AND ROLLED BETWEEN THE CLEFTS IN THE WILD TERRAIN...
BY THE STARS! THAT LOOKS LIKE AN INJURED MAN... BETTER TAKE A CLOSER SWEEP ROUND...AND TRY A LANDING...


BUT, UNFAMILIAR WITH THE LANDING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NEW PLANE, KEREN GOT INTO DIFFICULTIES...
COME ON, MY BEAUTY... STEADY... STEADY...
AND BEFORE HE REALISED WHAT WAS HAPPENING...


THE STARTLED WARRIOR WATCHED HORROR-STRUCK AS THE TINY TRIGAN FIGHTER SEEMED TO DISINTEGRATE BEFORE HIS EYES...
BY ALL THE MONSTERS...! HE MUST BE INJURED, AND I AM POWERLESS TO AID HIM.
BUT LUCK WAS WITH KEREN... AND HE QUICKLY RECOVERED FROM THE STUNNING EFFECT OF HIS BAD LANDING...
THANK THE GODS... HE LIVES...
PHEW! I'LL BE KICKED OUT OF THE TRIGAN AIR FORCE FOR MAKING SUCH A CRAZY LANDING...
WHEN KEREN REACHED THE INJURED MAN, HE SAW THAT HE WAS NEAR TO DEATH...
BY THE STARS, I SEE THAT LIKE MYSELF YOU ARE FROM DAVELI! HOW CAME YOU BY THESE TERRIBLE WOUNDS?
...AND I SEE THAT BY SOME EXTRAORDINARY GOOD FORTUNE YOU ARE THE VERY MAN I FEARED I WOULD NEVER REACH...PRINCE KEREN, SON OF IMBALA, RULER OF DAVELI.
YOU MUST REST, MY FRIEND... WHILE I LOOK FOR HELP...
NO... NO... I AM BEYOND AID, AND BEFORE I PASS TO THE NEXT WORLD I MUST GIVE YOU THE NEWS I WAS TOLD TO BRING YOU...DAVELI IS IN A STATE OF REBELLION...
YOUR FATHER, IMBALA, HAS BEEN DEPOSED BY HIS EVIL BROTHER, ROFFOLA, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE HAS BEEN KILLED... I CAME TO FIND YOU, BUT I WAS PURSUED BY SOME OF ROFFOLA'S MEN AND LEFT TO DIE IN THIS PLACE...BEWARE, THEY ARE NOT LONG GONE...

YOU HAVE DONE WELL, AND YOU ARE A WARRIOR OF WHOM DAVELI CAN BE PROUD. BY THE STARS, MY EVIL UNCLE SHALL PAY FOR HIS MISDEEDS.
YOU MUST HURRY, SIRE... YOUR PEOPLE SUFFER GREATLY... NOW, I CAN DO NO MORE... LONG LIVE DAVELI...
DESPITE KEREN'S EFFORTS TO SAVE HIM, THE WARRIOR FROM DAVELI DIED, AND KEREN NOW BEGAN TO ASSESS HIS OWN SERIOUS SITUATION...
THE CRAFT IS WRECKED BEYOND REPAIR... THE RADIO IS SMASHED... AND SOON IT WILL BE DARK.
QUICKLY, KEREN SALVAGED WHAT HE COULD FROM THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT'S EMERGENCY PACK...
IT IS AT LEAST A HUNDRED LEAGUES TO THE JUNGLES OF DAVELI... PROBABLY AS FAR TO TRIGAN CITY... AND THAT WAY THE GROUND IS ROUGH...
AS THE TWIN SUNS DIPPED BELOW THE HORIZON, KEREN MADE HIS FATEFUL DECISION...
JANNO DOES NOT KNOW IN WHICH DIRECTION I FLEW... SO I CAN DO NOTHING BUT MAKE FOR DAVELI AND HOPE I DO NOT MEET UP WITH THE MEN WHO KILLED THE FAITHFUL WARRIOR...
AND BARELY TWENTY LEAGUES AWAY...
IT WAS OVER THERE, I TELL YOU... A FLASH OF FIRE FROM THE GROUND...AND A SOUND LIKE THUNDER...IT CAME FROM THE DIRECTION IN WHICH WE LEFT THAT FOOL OF AN IMBALA WARRIOR TO DIE.
THEN WE SHALL RETURN TO THE PLACE IN THE MORNING WHEN THE FIRST SUN CLEARS THE MOUNTAIN PEAK...

WHEN THE REBEL DAVELIAN WARRIORS ARRIVED AT THE SCENE OF THE CRASH-LANDING, THEY WERE FACED WITH A BAFFLING PROBLEM...
HE WHO BROUGHT THIS STRANGE MACHINE HERE DID NOT DIE IN IT.
NOR WAS HE INJURED IT SEEMS, AS HE WAS ABLE TO BURY THE MAN FROM IMBALA'S BODYGUARD.
HE CANNOT HAVE TRAVELLED FAR... WE MUST SEARCH THE AREA.
MEANWHILE, WHILE KEREN HAD REACHED THE EDGE OF THE JUNGLES OF DAVELI WHICH CONTAINED THE DREADED MONSTERS...
SO FAR, SO GOOD... ONCE IN THE JUNGLE THEY HAVE LITTLE CHANCE OF FINDING ME...
...JANNO WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE ALARMED AT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HIS COMRADE...
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT... IT IS NOW MANY HOURS SINCE WE PARTED DURING THE TEST FLIGHT. HIS FUEL MUST HAVE LONG SINCE RUN OUT...
AND NO RADIO MESSAGE... COME, WE MUST WIDEN THE AREA OF SEARCH NOW THAT DAYLIGHT HAS RETURNED.
AND SO, JANNO AND THE FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR SET OFF ON YET ONE MORE SEARCH PATTERN...
THESE VALLEYS ARE THE BADLANDS APPROACHING DAVELI. IF KEREN FORCED LANDED HERE HE COULD BE IN TROUBLE...
YES... BUT LOOK! DOWN THERE!
THE FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR MADE A SLOW, WIDE SWEEP ACROSS THE VALLEY...AND...
OVER THERE, NEAR THOSE ROCKS...
I SEE IT... STAND BY FOR A LANDING...
...THEN MADE A PERFECT TOUCH-DOWN...
IT IS STRANGE THAT HE SHOULD CRASH HERE...HE WOULD STILL HAVE FUEL FOR A RETURN FLIGHT... DO YOU SEE HIM?
NO... THE COCKPIT IS EMPTY...

BECAUSE, A SPLIT SECOND LATER...

AAAGH!

IT WAS A SHORT, SHARP FIGHT...

UUGH!

AAAAH!

UUUUGH!

AND ONE WHICH WAS TO COST YET ANOTHER LIFE...

AAGH!

YOU MURDERING DEVIL!

AND NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO DIE, TRIGAN!

WITH THE FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR LYING DEAD, JANNO BEGAN A FIGHT FOR HIS LIFE WITH THE REMAINING DAVELI WARRIOR...
YOU WILL NOT LIVE, TRIGAN CUR!
UUUH!
OOUF!
A TRIGAN ALWAYS WAS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR ANY DAVELIAN...
IT WAS A FIGHT THAT WAS TO BRING NEAR-DISASTER FOR THE YOUNG TRIGAN...
BY THE STARS... THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...!
...AS YOU ARE ABOUT TO FIND OUT...!
ALL TRIGAN AIR FORCE PILOTS WERE TRAINED IN UNARMED COMBAT, AND JANNO HAD RECEIVED EXTRA TRAINING FROM HIS FATHER...
...WHICH WAS TO SAVE HIS LIFE ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION...
AAAAGH!

WITH THE FIGHT WELL AND TRULY WON, JANNO INSPECTED THE DAMAGE THE TWO-SEATER ATMOSPHERE CRAFT HAD SUFFERED... FROM HIS ACCIDENTAL HEAT BOLT...

THERE IS NO HOPE OF THAT EVER GETTING OFF THE GROUND AGAIN...

JANNO QUICKLY SEARCHED THE AREA FOR ANY SIGNS OF KEREN, AND FINDING NONE DECIDED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CRASHED SINGLE-SEATER...

AH! KEREN IS ALIVE... HE HAS TAKEN THE EMERGENCY KIT... AND... WHAT'S THIS?

JANNO READ A MESSAGE HIS COMRADE HAD LEFT BEHIND...

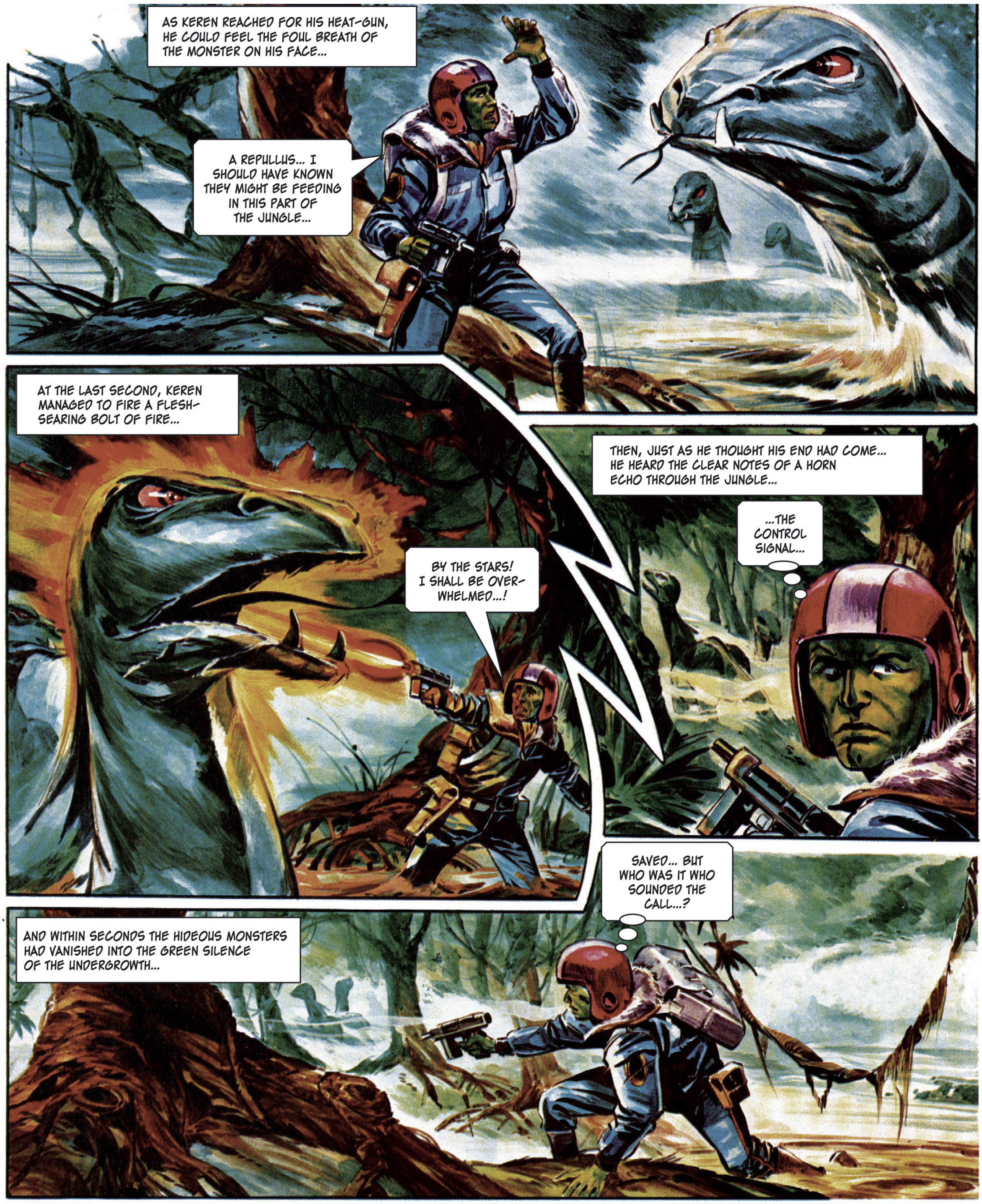
SO... THAT'S IT... HE HAS GONE TO DAVELI TO HELP HIS FATHER...

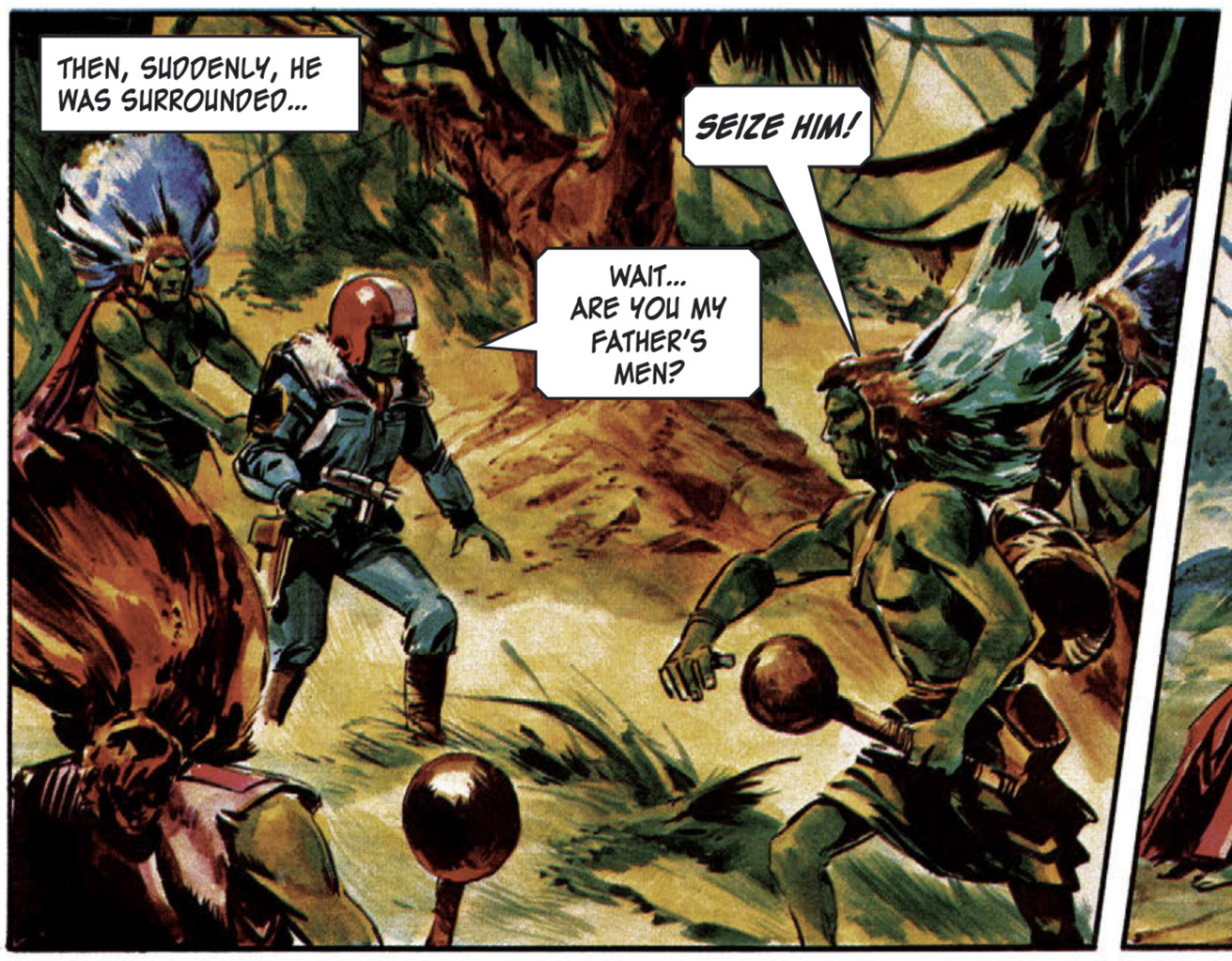
FOLLOWING KEREN'S EXAMPLE, JANNO ALSO LEFT A MESSAGE BEHIND... AND, TAKING THE EMERGENCY KIT FROM HIS OWN PLANE...

FROM WHAT I REMEMBER OF DAVELI ITS JUNGLES ARE INHABITED BY STRANGE MONSTERS... I HOPE KEREN HAS REMEMBERED THE DANGERS OF HIS OWN LAND...

AT THAT MOMENT, JANNO'S COMRADE IN ARMS WAS REMEMBERING ONLY TOO WELL AS A FEARSOME HEAD ROSE FROM THE SWAMPS...

AAAAGH!


AS KEREN REACHED FOR HIS HEAT-GUN, HE COULD FEEL THE FOUL BREATH OF THE MONSTER ON HIS FACE...
A REPULLUS... I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THEY MIGHT BE FEEDING IN THIS PART OF THE JUNGLE...
AT THE LAST SECOND, KEREN MANAGED TO FIRE A FLESH-SEARING BOLT OF FIRE...
BY THE STARS! I SHALL BE OVER-WHELMED...!
THEN, JUST AS HE THOUGHT HIS END HAD COME... HE HEARD THE CLEAR NOTES OF A HORN ECHO THROUGH THE JUNGLE...
...THE CONTROL SIGNAL...
SAVED... BUT WHO WAS IT WHO SOUNDED THE CALL...?
AND WITHIN SECONDS THE HIDEOUS MONSTERS HAD VANISHED INTO THE GREEN SILENCE OF THE UNDERGROWTH...


THEN, SUDDENLY, HE WAS SURROUNDED...
SEIZE HIM!
WAIT... ARE YOU MY FATHER'S MEN?

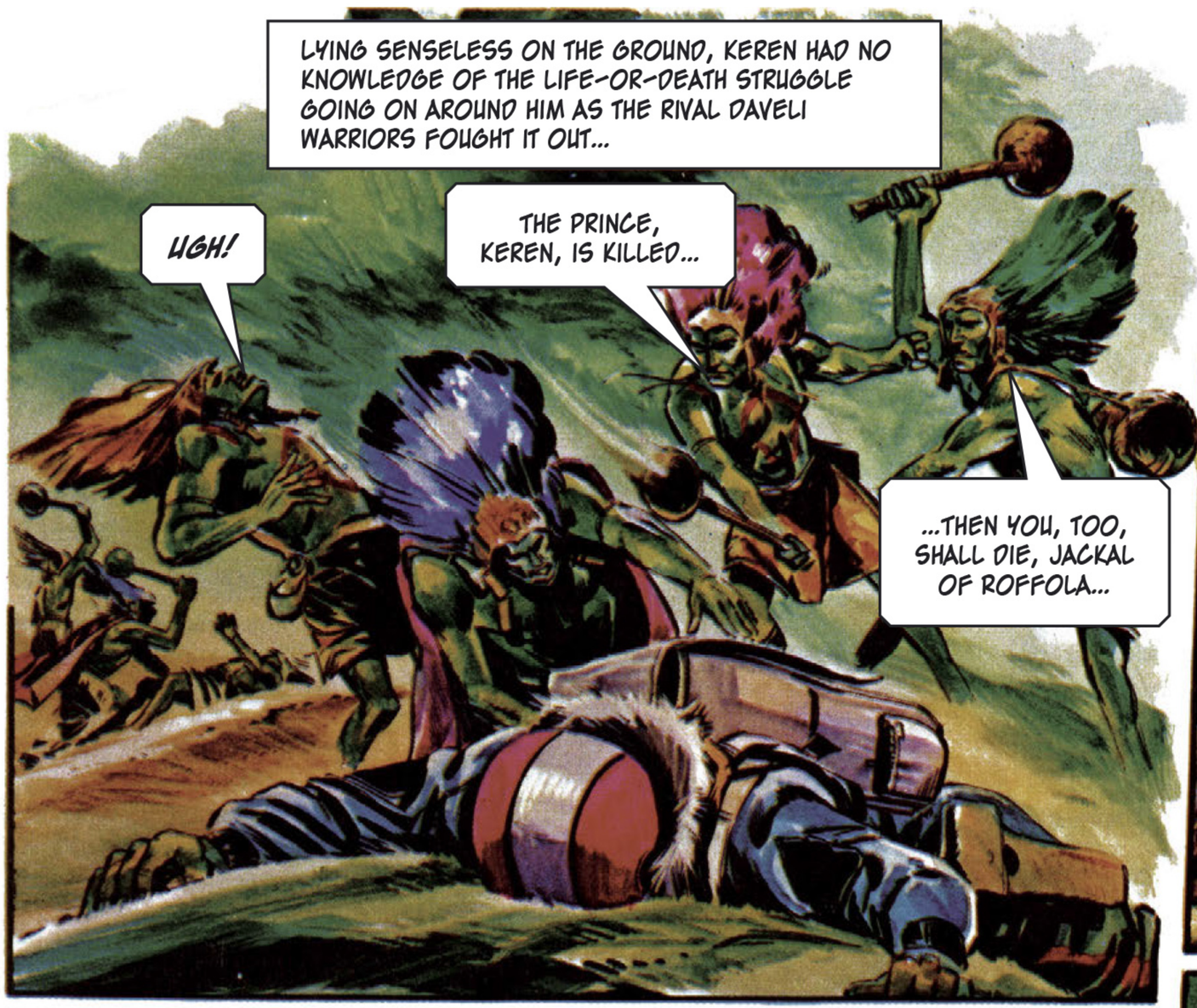
WHEN THE WARRIORS HEARD HIS VOICE, THEY REALISED WHO HE WAS...
IT IS PRINCE KEREN... THE SON OF IMBALA...
WE SALUTE YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS...
THE RIVER GODS HAVE ANSWERED OUR PRAYERS...

LUCKILY FOR KEREN, THE WARRIORS WERE LOYAL TO HIS FATHER, AND WERE PART OF A BAND OF GUERILLA FIGHTERS...
SO, IT WAS YOU WHO CALLED OFF THE MONSTERS... I OWE YOU MY LIFE.
THE MONSTERS WE DO NOT FEAR, YOUR HIGHNESS...IT IS ROFFOLA'S MURDERING GUARDS WHO...

AND EVEN AS THE WARRIOR SPOKE, THERE WAS A SUDDEN MOVEMENT IN THE DENSE GREEN OF THE JUNGLE...

THE SOUND REACHED THE SHARP EARS OF THE FRIENDLY GUERILLA FIGHTERS, BUT THE SUDDEN RUSH STILL TOOK THEM BY SURPRISE...
AIEEE!!
IT IS THE SON OF IMBALA... KILL HIM!
RUN FOR THE JUNGLE, PRINCE... WE WILL FIGHT THESE DOGS!

KEREN WAS NOT A MAN TO RUN FROM A FIGHT, AND HE DID NOT HEED THE WARNING, BUT...
UUUGH!

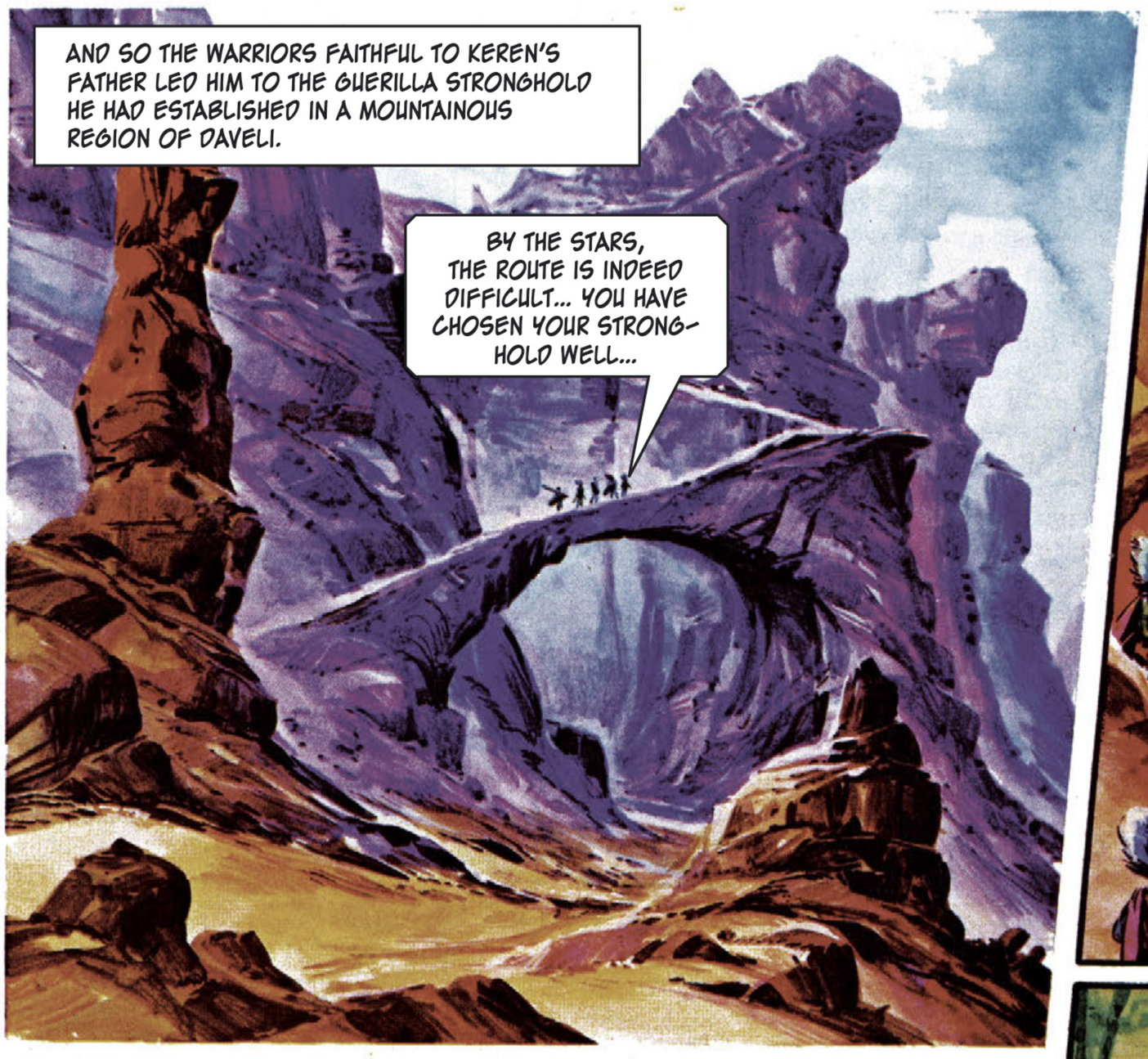

LYING SENSELESS ON THE GROUND, KEREN HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE LIFE-OR-DEATH STRUGGLE GOING ON AROUND HIM AS THE RIVAL DAVELI WARRIORS FOUGHT IT OUT...
UGH!
THE PRINCE, KEREN, IS KILLED...
...THEN YOU, TOO, SHALL DIE, JACKAL OF ROFFOLA...

BUT KEREN'S FLYING HELMET HAD SAVED HIM FROM SERIOUS HARM...AND WITHIN A MATTER OF SECONDS HE HAD RECOVERED FROM THE BLOW TO HIS HEAD...
ROFFOLA'S MEN... STAND AWAY FROM THEM...

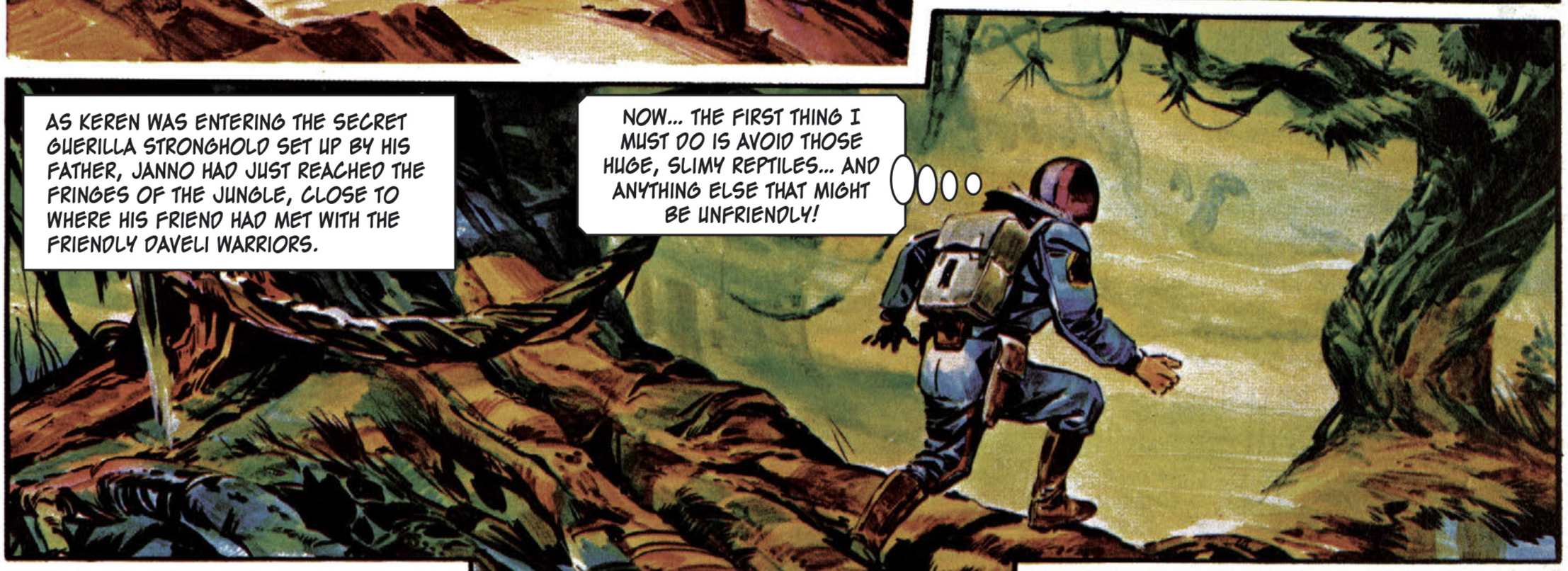
ONE SEARING BOLT FROM HIS HEAT-GUN WAS ENOUGH...
AAAAAH!
...THE PRIMITIVELY ARMED WARRIORS FLED...

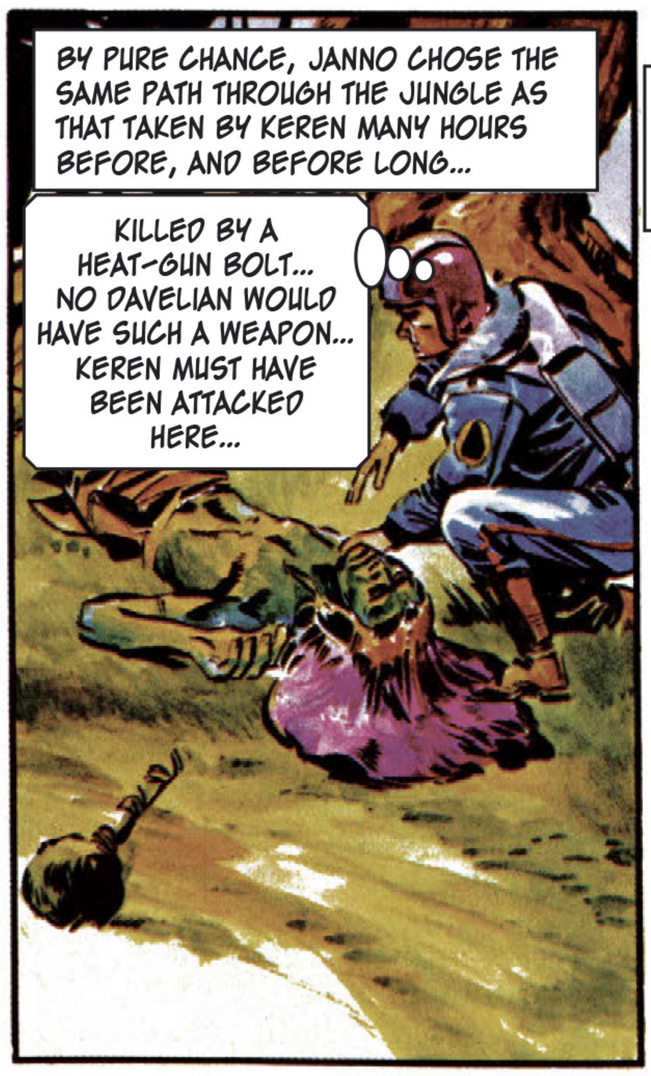
SUCH WEAPONS COULD DESTROY ALL ROFFOLA'S MEN, YOUR HIGHNESS.
IT IS TRULY LIKE A BOLT OF LIGHTNING FROM THE GODS!
YES, BUT UNHAPPILY IT IS THE ONLY ONE IN ALL DAVELI, AND ITS FIRE CAPSULES WOULD SOON BE EXHAUSTED... NOW, CAN YOU TAKE ME TO MY FATHER?

AYE, THAT WE CAN...BUT THE JOURNEY IS LONG, AND WE MUST TELL YOU THAT IMBALA IS WEAK FROM THE WOUNDS HE RECEIVED AT THE HANDS OF HIS TREACHEROUS BROTHER.
THEN LET US NOT DELAY... THOSE MURDERING REBELS MAY RETURN WITH SOME MORE OF THEIR CRONIES...


AND SO THE WARRIORS FAITHFUL TO KEREN'S FATHER LED HIM TO THE GUERILLA STRONGHOLD HE HAD ESTABLISHED IN A MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF DAVELI.
BY THE STARS, THE ROUTE IS INDEED DIFFICULT... YOU HAVE CHOSEN YOUR STRONG-HOLD WELL...

AFTER ANOTHER HOUR OF THE MUSCLE-ACHING CLIMB, THEY REACHED A SECRET CAVE ENTRANCE ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE...
PRINCE KEREN!
YES, IT IS HE... SEND WORD AHEAD TO THE KING.


AS KEREN WAS ENTERING THE SECRET GUERILLA STRONGHOLD SET UP BY HIS FATHER, JANNO HAD JUST REACHED THE FRINGES OF THE JUNGLE, CLOSE TO WHERE HIS FRIEND HAD MET WITH THE FRIENDLY DAVELI WARRIORS.
NOW... THE FIRST THING I MUST DO IS AVOID THOSE HUGE, SLIMY REPTILES... AND ANYTHING ELSE THAT MIGHT BE UNFRIENDLY!


BY PURE CHANCE, JANNO CHOSE THE SAME PATH THROUGH THE JUNGLE AS THAT TAKEN BY KEREN MANY HOURS BEFORE, AND BEFORE LONG...
KILLED BY A HEAT-GUN BOLT... NO DAVELIAN WOULD HAVE SUCH A WEAPON... KEREN MUST HAVE BEEN ATTACKED HERE...

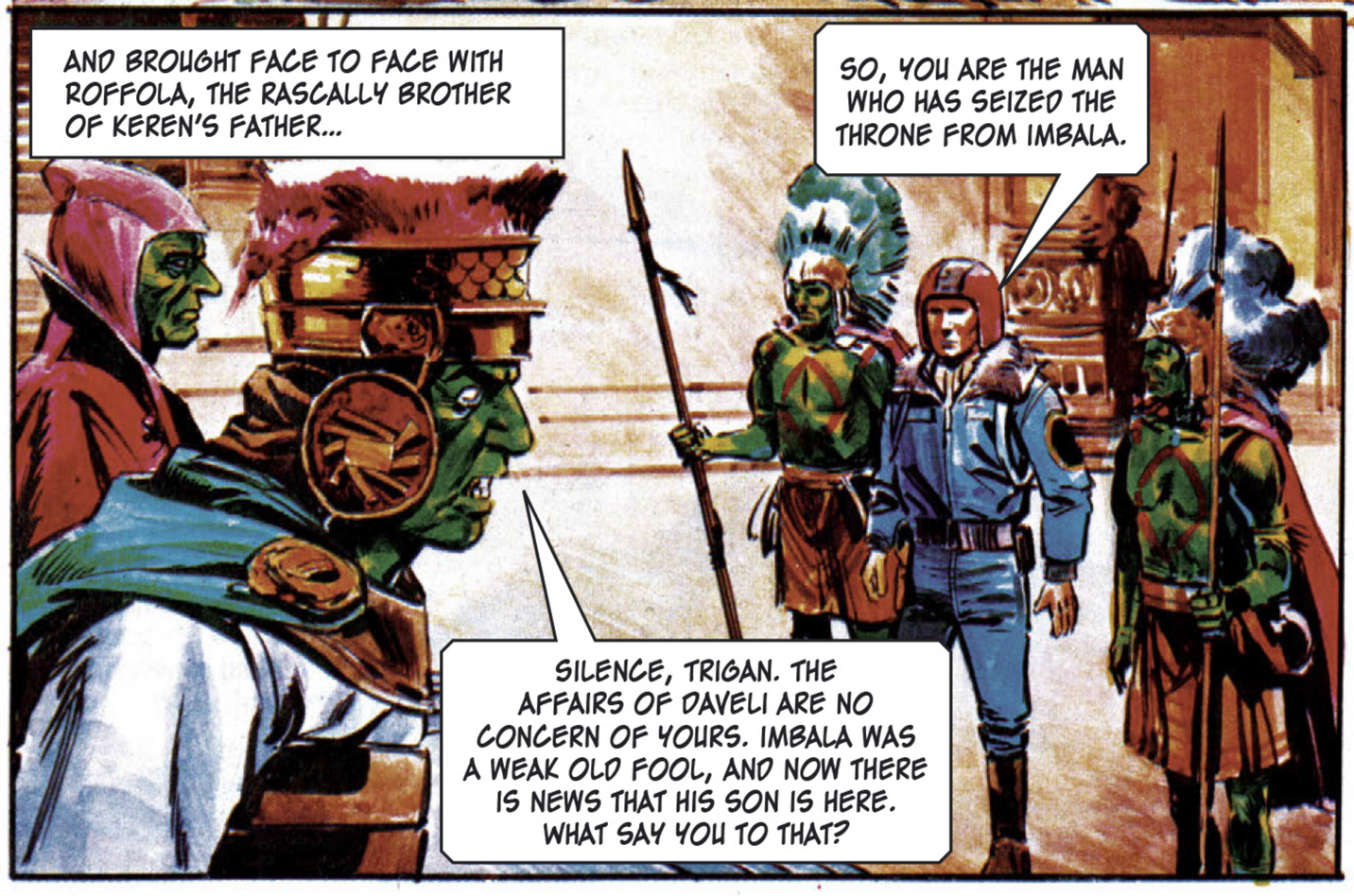
BUT, AS JANNO SPECULATED ABOUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED, THE SURVIVING REBEL WARRIORS HAD RETUNED - WITH REINFORCEMENTS.
IT IS THIS WAY... SPREAD OUT...

AND THIS TIME THEY MADE NO MISTAKE...
A WHITE-FACED TRIGAN... A SPY, PERHAPS...AND NO SPY LEAVES DAVELI ALIVE!

OUTNUMBERED AND DISARMED, JANNO WAS ABLE ONLY TO PUT UP A TOKEN STRUGGLE AGAINST THE REBEL WARRIORS.
I DON'T NEED ANYONE TO TELL ME WHO YOU ARE – YOU ARE FROM ROFFOLA... BUT WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH KEREN?
HE HAS GONE INTO THE JUNGLE WHERE THE MONSTERS WILL END HIS FIGHT...

JANNO CONCEALED THE SENSE OF RELIEF HE FELT WHEN HE HEARD THAT HIS COMRADE WAS STILL ALIVE...
AND YOU WILL GO BEFORE ROFFOLA, WHO WILL DOUBTLESS MAKE AN END TO YOUR LIFE. WE DO NOT LIKE SPIES IN DAVELI.
I AM NO SPY.

SO JANNO WAS TAKEN TO THE STRANGE JUNGLE CAPITAL OF DAVELI...

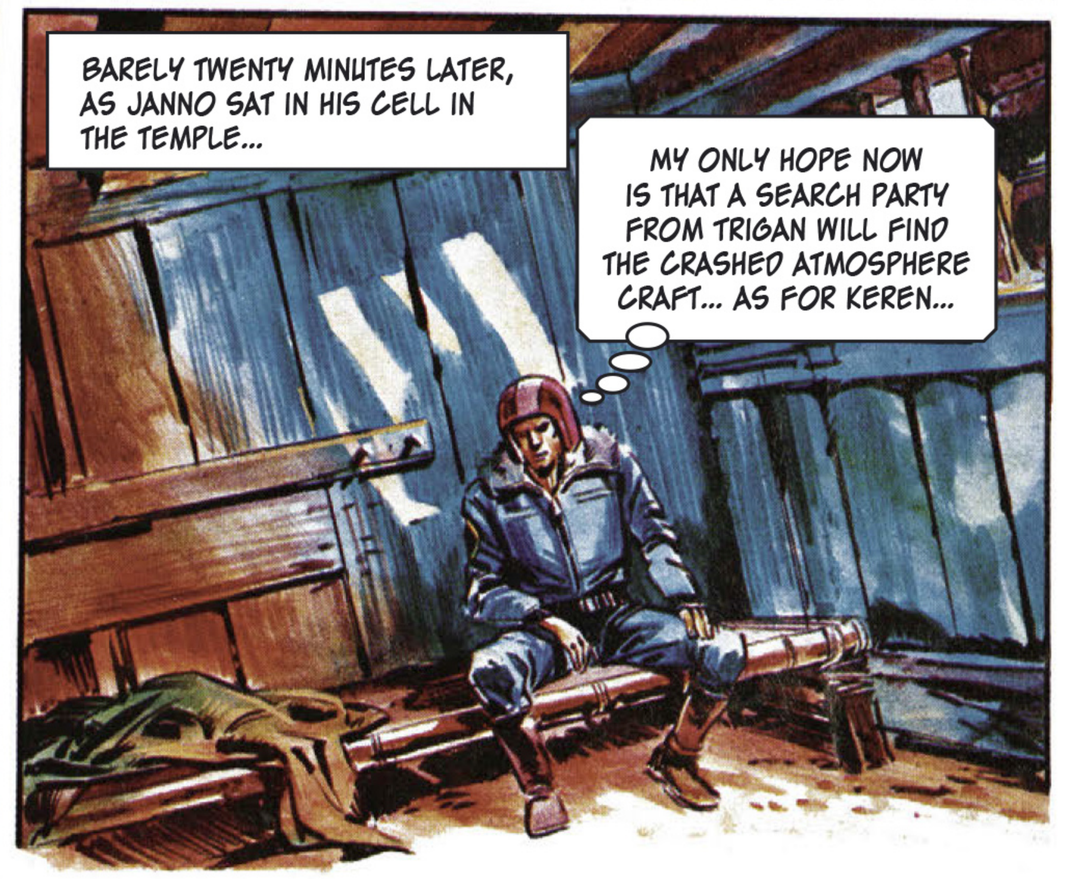

AND BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH ROFFOLA, THE RASCALLY BROTHER OF KEREN'S FATHER...
SO, YOU ARE THE MAN WHO HAS SEIZED THE THRONE FROM IMBALA.
SILENCE, TRIGAN. THE AFFAIRS OF DAVELI ARE NO CONCERN OF YOURS. IMBALA WAS A WEAK OLD FOOL, AND NOW THERE IS NEWS THAT HIS SON IS HERE. WHAT SAY YOU TO THAT?

I SAY TO YOU THAT IMBALA HAS SWORN A TREATY OF ETERNAL BROTHERHOOD WITH THE PEOPLE OF TRIGAN, AND WHEN MY UNCLE HEARS OF THIS HE WILL MARCH ON DAVELI IN SUPPORT OF THE RIGHTFUL RULER.

JANNO'S WORDS BROUGHT AN OUTBURST OF UNCONTROLLABLE RAGE FROM ROFFOLA...
BUT TRIGO WILL NOT HEAR... FOR YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO TELL HIM. GUARDS! REMOVE HIM TO AWAIT EXECUTION.

THE REBEL GUARDS TOOK JANNO TO A CELL IN ONE OF THE TEMPLES IN THE CITY...
ROFFOLA IS A MADMAN... HE IS RULING THESE PEOPLE BY FORCE.

AS THEY PASSED NEAR ONE OF THE BUILDINGS...
A WHITE-SKINNED TRIGAN... I MUST TAKE NEWS OF THIS TO THE OTHERS...BUT FIRST...


BARELY TWENTY MINUTES LATER, AS JANNO SAT IN HIS CELL IN THE TEMPLE...
MY ONLY HOPE NOW IS THAT A SEARCH PARTY FROM TRIGAN WILL FIND THE CRASHED ATMOSPHERE CRAFT... AS FOR KEREN...

THE FACE OF THE MAN IN THE CROWD PRESSED AGAINST THE BARS OF HIS PRISON CELL...
WHO ARE YOU...? DO YOU COME TO MOCK ME?

BE OF GOOD COURAGE, TRIGAN... YOU HAVE FRIENDS... PRAY TO THE GODS THAT THEY WILL BE IN TIME TO SAVE YOU...

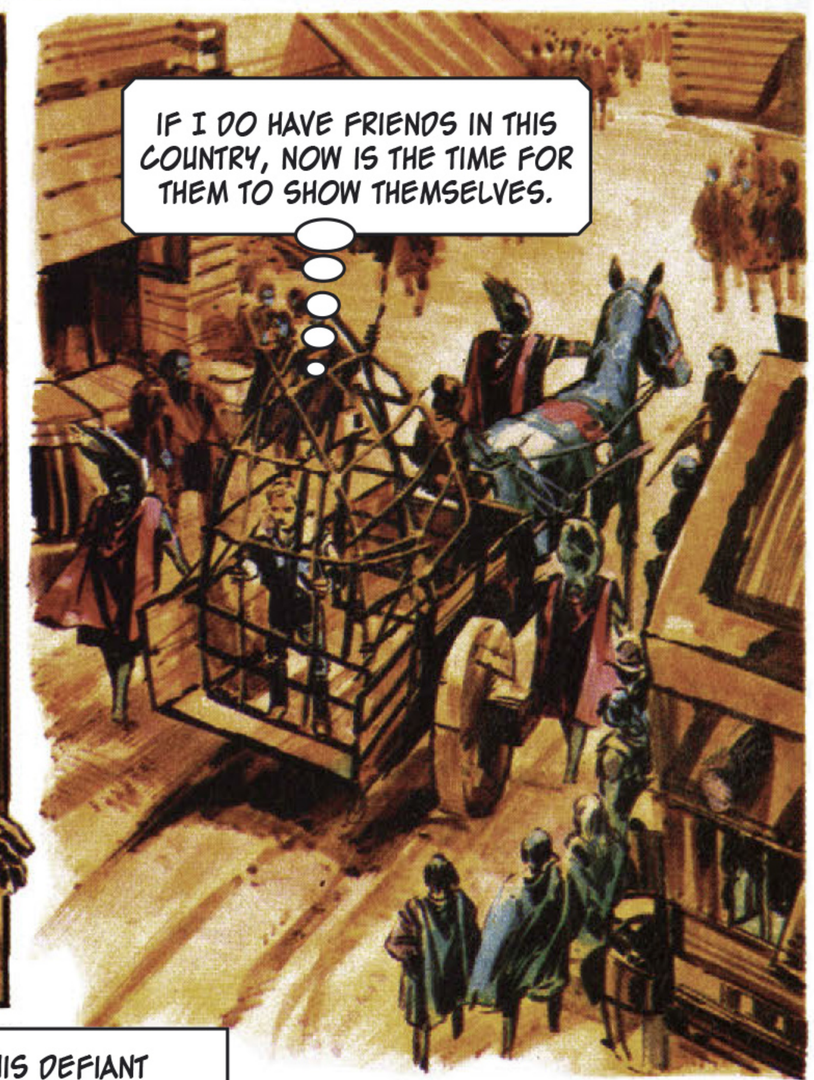
WHEN THE MYSTERIOUS DAVELIAN MOVED AWAY FROM THE WINDOW OF THE CELL WHERE JANNO WAS HELD CAPTIVE, JANNO RUSHED TO CALL HIM BACK...
HEY! YOU... WHOEVER YOU ARE... COME BACK!
BUT BEFORE JANNO COULD CALL AGAIN, THE MAN HAD VANISHED INTO THE CROWD...
THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF RESISTANCE MOVEMENT IN THE CITY... I WONDER IF KEREN HAS BEEN ABLE TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THEM?
AT THAT VERY MOMENT, JANNO'S COMRADE WAS EMERGING FROM THE ROCK TUNNEL WHICH LED TO THE GUERILLA'S MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD, MANY MILES WAY...
YOUR HIGHNESS... WE HAVE SAD AND TERRIBLE NEWS FOR YOU...
MAY THE GODS GIVE YOU STRENGTH... YOUR FATHER, THE GREAT IMBALA HAS DIED OF HIS WOUNDS...
LONG LIVE PRINCE KEREN, THE NEW RULER OF DAVELI...
DEEPLY DISTRESSED BY THE NEWS, KEREN SWORE AN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO HIS PEOPLE...
MY FATHER WAS A GOOD AND BRAVE RULER OF HIS PEOPLE, AND I SWEAR THAT I SHALL SERVE THEM WITH AS MUCH COURAGE AS I POSSESS, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY COST ME MY OWN LIFE.

AND AT A SIMPLE CEREMONY HE WAS CONFIRMED AS THE TRUE KING OF THE DAVELIAN EMPIRE...
OUR FIRST TASK IS TO RID THE LAND OF THIS TYRANT, ROFFOLA, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MY FATHER'S DEATH, AND WHO HAS ENSLAVED SO MANY OF OUR CITIZENS.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, AS KEREN HELD A COUNCIL OF WAR WITH HIS CHIEF LIEUTENANTS, HE RECEIVED A MESSAGE.
IT IS FROM OUR CONTACT IN THE CITY...
BY ALL THE STARS...! THEY HAVE JANNO... HE MUST HAVE COME LOOKING FOR ME... WE MUST MOVE FAST, OR ELSE ROFFOLA WILL KILL HIM...

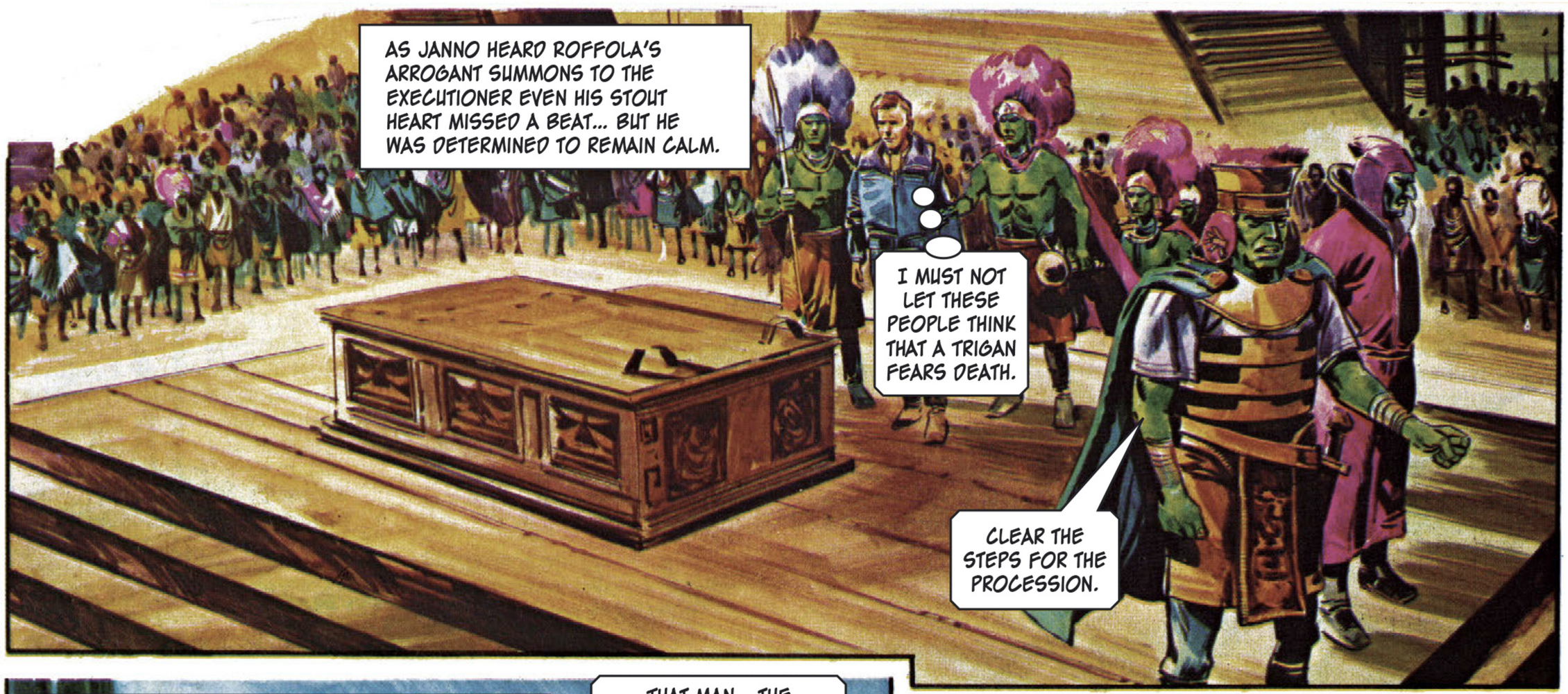
MEANWHILE, IN THE CITY, ROFFOLA'S EVIL FIRST MINISTER SOUGHT THE EAR OF HIS MASTER...
I TELL YOU, ROFFOLA, THE PEOPLE IN THE CITY ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE UNRULY...OUR GUARDS ARE CONSTANTLY TAKING PRISONERS... WE NEED SOMETHING TO DIVERT THEIR ATTENTION...
THEN WE SHALL GIVE IT THEM... PREPARE FOR THE EXECUTION OF THAT INSOLENT YOUNG TRIGAN.

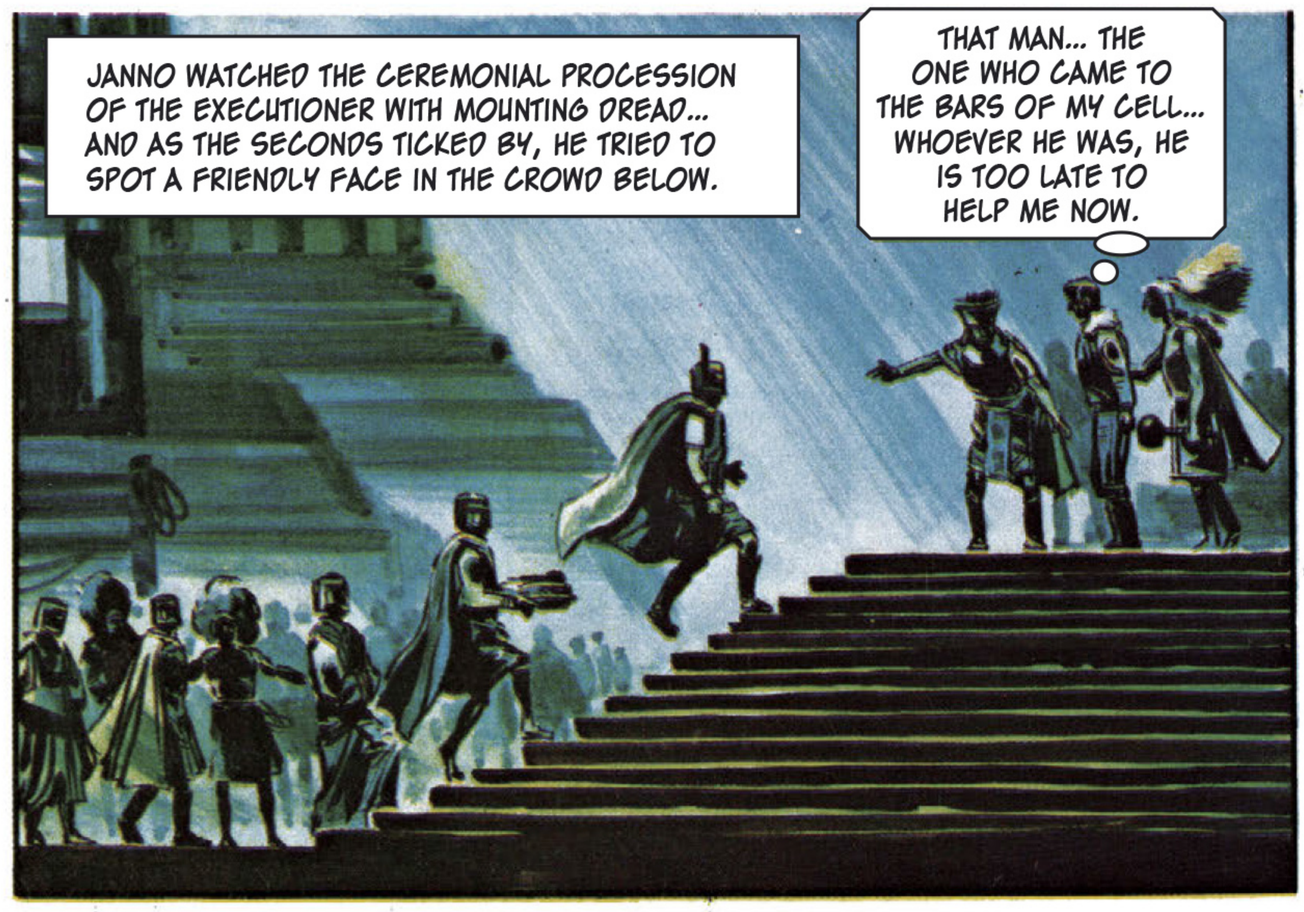
AND SO, LATER THAT DAY...
ON YOUR FEET, TRIGAN... YOUR TIME HAS COME...


IF I DO HAVE FRIENDS IN THIS COUNTRY, NOW IS THE TIME FOR THEM TO SHOW THEMSELVES.

BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF ANY HELP...
WHERE ARE THE LEGIONS OF THE EMPEROR TRIGO NOW, EH?
NEVER FEAR, THEY WILL COME FOR YOU, ROFFOLA - AND TENFOLD IF YOU TAKE MY LIFE.

JANNO KNEW THAT HIS DEFIANT WORDS MEANT LITTLE TO THE MADMAN WHO SEEMED TO WIELD ABSOLUTE POWER IN DAVELI...
SEND FOR THE EXECUTIONER!


AS JANNO HEARD ROFFOLA'S ARROGANT SUMMONS TO THE EXECUTIONER EVEN HIS STOUT HEART MISSED A BEAT... BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO REMAIN CALM.
I MUST NOT LET THESE PEOPLE THINK THAT A TRIGAN FEARS DEATH.
CLEAR THE STEPS FOR THE PROCESSION.


JANNO WATCHED THE CEREMONIAL PROCESSION OF THE EXECUTIONER WITH MOUNTING DREAD... AND AS THE SECONDS TICKED BY, HE TRIED TO SPOT A FRIENDLY FACE IN THE CROWD BELOW.
THAT MAN... THE ONE WHO CAME TO THE BARS OF MY CELL... WHOEVER HE WAS, HE IS TOO LATE TO HELP ME NOW.

BELOW THE SACRIFICIAL PYRAMID, THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OF DAVELI WERE STRANGELY SILENT.
IT IS GOOD TO SEE THAT THE SPIRIT OF THE YOUNG TRIGAN IS UNBROKEN.
AYE... WOULD THAT WE COULD FIND SOME WAY OF SAVING HIM, BUT ROFFOLA'S MEN WOULD CUT US TO PIECES...

A FEW MINUTES LATER, ONE OF ROFFOLA'S MEN LIFTED A TRUMPET TO HIS LIPS, AND...
LET THE CEREMONY COMMENCE.

JANNO FOUND HIMSELF LOOKING INTO WHAT SEEMED TO HIM LIKE THE FACE OF DEATH ITSELF...
PREPARE YOURSELF, TRIGAN!

AND THEN, AS THE HIDEOUS KNIFE BEGAN TO DESCEND, JANNO HEARD A FAMILIAR VOICE.
DO NOT FEAR THE KNIFE – IT WILL NOT HARM YOU...BUT YOU MUST FEIGN DEATH...
KEREN!
THE 'EXECUTIONER' WAS INDEED JANNO'S COMRADE, AND THE KNIFE HAD BEEN MADE WITH A HOLLOW HANDLE, SO THAT WHEN IT PLUNGED DOWN INTO JANNO'S BODY...
KEREN'S PLAN WAS TO TAKE JANNO'S 'DEAD' BODY, AND ESCAPE INTO THE JUNGLE WITHOUT AROUSING SUSPICION.
IT IS DONE!
THE TRIGAN IS DEAD! THE GODS ARE APPEASED!
THEN KEREN TRIED TO CARRY OUT THE SECOND PART OF HIS DOUBLE BLUFF...
AND NOW I CLAIM MY PRIVILEGE AS EXECUTIONER...THE BODY MUST BE RELEASED TO ME TO TAKE TO THE TEMPLE...
BUT ROFFOLA'S WILY CHIEF MINISTER SUDDENLY THWARTED HIS CAREFULLY THOUGHT-OUT PLAN.
ONLY ROFFOLA HAS SUCH PRIVILEGES, HIGH PRIEST...THE BODY SHOULD BE TAKEN TO THE PALACE.
NO, I SAY THE BODY IS MINE, OR THE WRATH OF THE RIVER GODS WILL DESCEND UPON DAVELI.
AND WHEN ROFFOLA SPOKE, KEREN REALISED HE WAS IN TROUBLE...
AND I SAY YES, HIGH PRIEST... OR ELSE MY WRATH WILL FALL UPON YOU...
GUARDS... SEIZE HIM!

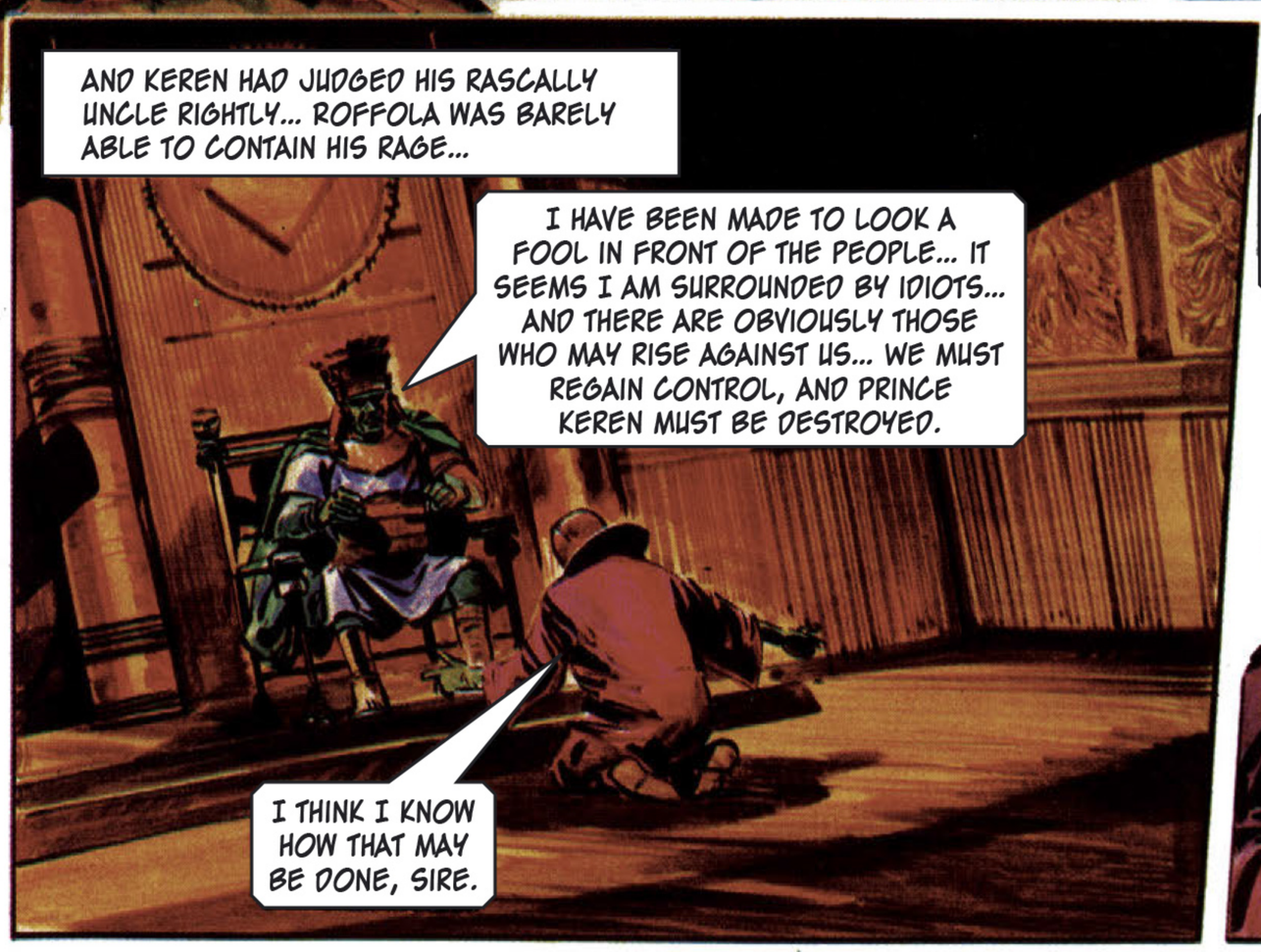
KEREN'S PLAN TO RESCUE JANNO BY TAKING HIS 'DEAD' BODY AWAY AFTER PRETENDING TO EXECUTE HIM, HAD RUN INTO TROUBLE WHEN ROFFOLA ORDERED HIS MEN TO TAKE OVER THE 'CEREMONY'...
TAKE THE BODY FROM THEM. I SAY... REMOVE THOSE PRIESTS.
...NOW KEREN KNEW HE WOULD HAVE TO ACT QUICKLY.
IT WAS A DESPERATE MOVE, BUT IT STILL HAD THE VITAL ELEMENT OF SURPRISE...
HO, THERE MY WARRIORS...! WE MUST FIGHT OUR WAY OUT...
BY THE STARS, IT IS PRINCE KEREN!
AND KEREN'S MEN RESPONDED MAGNIFICENTLY...
DOWN WITH THE TYRANT ROFFOLA.
PRINCE KEREN FOR EVER...
THIS WAY, JANNO... QUICK.
FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES THERE WAS PANDEMONIUM AS KEREN'S GUERILLA WARRIORS THREW OFF THEIR DISGUISES...
STOP THEM, YOU FOOLS... STOP THEM!
OUFF!
AYEEE!
THIS WAY, MEN... INTO THE CROWD...
ONCE THEY RECOGNISED KEREN, A GREAT SHOUT WENT UP IN THE CROWD...
IT IS KEREN, THE SON OF IMBALA!
LET THEM THROUGH...
THE PRINCE... AID HIM...

IF EVER KEREN NEEDED PROOF THAT ROFFOLA AND HIS TYRANNICAL FOLLOWERS WERE HATED BY THE SIMPLE PEOPLE OF DAVELI, HE NOW SAW IT WITH HIS OWN EYES.
MAKE WAY!
LET US PASS!

UNARMED AS THEY WERE, THEY WITHSTOOD THE BLOWS OF ROFFOLA'S GUARDS LONG ENOUGH TO ENABLE KEREN, JANNO AND THE COMMANDO BAND OF GUERILLAS TO ESCAPE...
GO, YOUR HIGHNESS... WE SHALL SEE THEY DO NOT REACH YOU...
YOU ARE BRAVE PEOPLE... AND WE SHALL RETURN TO FREE YOU OF THAT WRETCH ROFFOLA...

LATER, AS THE LITTLE BAND MADE ITS WAY BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN HEADQUARTERS...
NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE YEARS OF OUR COMRADESHIP I OWE YOU MY LIFE.
BUT YOU CAME TO SAVE ME, JANNO... AND YOU, TOO, WOULD HAVE GIVEN YOUR LIFE IF NECESSARY.

KEREN TOLD JANNO OF THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER...
MY HEART IS SAD FOR YOU, KEREN.
THANK YOU, BUT I'M AFRAID THAT MINE IS FULL OF ANGER... AND I FEAR, TOO, WHAT ROFFOLA MAY DO TO THE LOYAL PEOPLE OF DAVELI IN REVENGE FOR OUR ESCAPE...


AND KEREN HAD JUDGED HIS RASCALLY UNCLE RIGHTLY... ROFFOLA WAS BARELY ABLE TO CONTAIN HIS RAGE...
I HAVE BEEN MADE TO LOOK A FOOL IN FRONT OF THE PEOPLE... IT SEEMS I AM SURROUNDED BY IDIOTS... AND THERE ARE OBVIOUSLY THOSE WHO MAY RISE AGAINST US... WE MUST REGAIN CONTROL, AND PRINCE KEREN MUST BE DESTROYED.
I THINK I KNOW HOW THAT MAY BE DONE, SIRE.

WE MUST ARREST ONE HUNDRED OF THE PEOPLE IN THE CITY, AND THEN SEND WORD TO PRINCE KEREN THEY WILL BE KILLED UNLESS HE SURRENDERS TO YOU.
EXCELLENT... AND IF THAT DOES NOT MOVE HIM WE SHALL ARREST ANOTHER HUNDRED. SEE TO IT!

ROFFOLA'S THREAT TO ARREST A HUNDRED INNOCENT CITIZENS OF DAVELI AND IMPRISON THEM WAS SOON PUT INTO EFFECT...
OUTSIDE, YOU! KING ROFFOLA HAS NEED OF YOUR SERVICES.
WHAT GREAT EVIL IS THIS TYRANT BRINGING ON US NOW?
THEY SAY THERE IS A PROCLAMATION POSTED IN THE CITY CENTRE.
AS THE PEOPLE WERE DRAGGED OFF TO A STOCKADE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, OTHERS READ THE PROCLAMATION...
IT SAYS THAT ONE PRISONER A DAY WILL BE KILLED UNTIL PRINCE KEREN GIVES HIMSELF UP.
AND ONE OF THEM WAS THE MAN WHO WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE LOYAL GUERILLAS.
I MUST GET WORD TO HIM.
WITHIN THE HOUR, HE HAD SLIPPED OUT OF THE CITY AND HEADED FOR THE SECRET MOUNTAIN STRONG-HOLD, BUT.
THAT IS THE MAN...
YES. NOW WE KNOW THAT PRINCE KEREN WILL SOON HEAR WHAT HAS HAPPENED. AND SOON WE SHALL ALSO KNOW WHERE HE IS HIDING.
MEANWHILE, KEREN AND JANNO, UNAWARE OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE CAPITAL OF DAVELI, WERE CONSIDERING THEIR NEXT MOVE...
SOMEHOW WE MUST OVERCOME THE REBELS. UNHAPPILY, THEY OUT-NUMBER US TEN-TO-ONE.
THEN, OLD FRIEND, WE MUST USE EXTRAORDINARY MEANS, AND I HAVE AN IDEA. WE MUST RECRUIT THE MONSTERS OF DAVELI.

THE MONSTERS?
WHY NOT? YOU SAY THAT SOME OF YOUR MEN KNOW HOW TO CONTROL THEM. SURELY WE CAN USE THEM TO ATTACK THE CITY.

THE IDEA WAS A STARTLING ONE, AND KEREN THOUGHT HARD FOR A FEW MOMENTS.
IT IS AN IDEA WORTHY OF THE NEPHEW OF TRIGO. BUT THERE WILL BE GREAT RISKS. THE SOUND FROM THESE HORNS GIVES US ONLY LIMITED CONTROL OVER THE MONSTERS. THEY CANNOT DISTINGUISH FRIEND FROM FOE.

BUT WE CAN, KEREN. AND WE MUST ARRANGE FOR THE FOE TO BE WHERE THE MONSTERS CAN WORK TO OUR ADVANTAGE.
EASIER SAID THAN DONE. ROFFOLA IS A CUNNING DEVIL, AND I DO NOT WISH TO DO ANY-THING MORE TO HARM MY PEOPLE.

EVEN AS THEY SPOKE, THEY HAD EVIDENCE OF THAT CUNNING.
YOUR HIGHNESS. ROFFOLA IS HOLDING HOSTAGES AGAINST YOUR SURRENDER.
IS THERE NO END TO THIS MAN'S ACTS OF MADNESS?

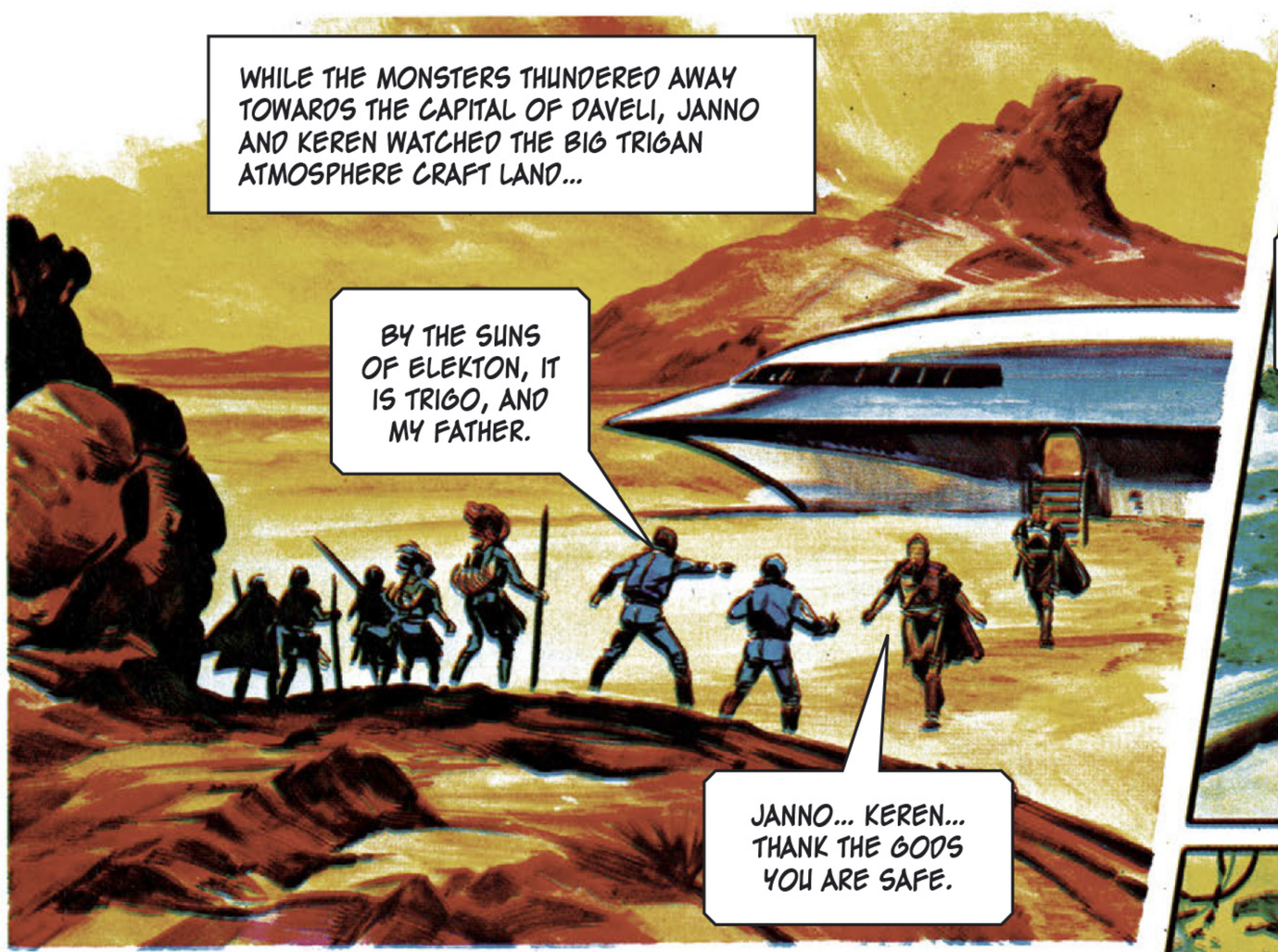
BELOW THE NARROW MOUNTAIN TRAIL LEADING TO THE GUERILLA STRONGHOLD, THE TWO REBEL GUARDS SMILED WITH SATISFACTION.
SO, THAT IS WHERE THEY ARE HIDING. ROFFOLA WILL BE WELL PLEASED WHEN HE LEARNS OF THIS.
AND THEY WERE RIGHT.
NOW WE HAVE THEM AT OUR MERCY, YOUR MAJESTY. WE CAN TAKE OUR WHOLE IMPERIAL GUARD TO LAY SIEGE TO THEIR STRONGHOLD. AND IF I KNOW PRINCE KEREN, HE WILL COME OUT TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES.
AND WE SHALL BE WAITING!

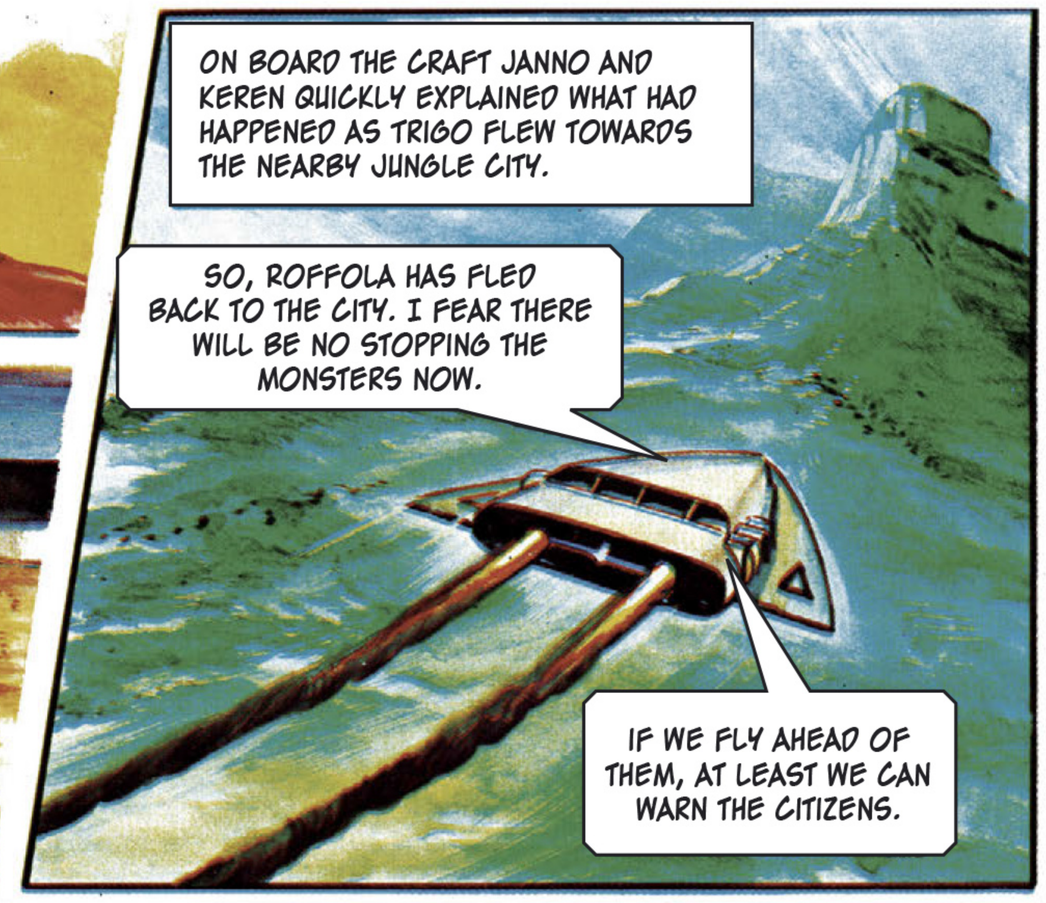
WHILE ROFFOLA AND HIS WARRIORS PREPARED TO LEAVE DAVELI ON THEIR WAY TO ATTACK KEREN AND JANNO...
THE TWO COMRADES COMPLETED THEIR PLANS TO USE THE MONSTERS OF THE JUNGLE SWAMPS TO OFFSET ROFFOLA'S MILITARY ADVANTAGE.
THERE IS A LARGE AREA OF JUNGLE AND SWAMP BETWEEN HERE AND THE CITY. A GOOD PLACE TO CHOOSE FOR A BATTLEGROUND IF ROFFOLA ATTACKS.
I AGREE. BUT FIRST WE MUST BRING OUR OWN SMALL FORCE OUT OF THE STRONGHOLD OR ELSE WE MAY BE TRAPPED.
AGAIN, JANNO'S INHERITED TACTICAL SKILLS CAME TO THE FORE.
ROFFOLA WILL EXPECT YOU TO TRY TO RESCUE THE HOSTAGES, SO HE IS PROBABLY ALREADY ON HIS WAY WITH A SUPERIOR FORCE. WE MUST ARRANGE A MONSTER RECEPTION!
VERY WELL. BUT LET US ACT, FAST!
QUICKLY, KEREN LED HIS SMALL FORCE OF FAITHFUL GUERILLAS OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD.
LEAVE A SMALL REAR-GUARD HERE, KEREN. HAVE THEM LIGHT FIRES OVER A WIDE AREA. THAT WILL DRAW ROFFOLA FROM THE JUNGLE.
LEAVING PART OF HIS SMALL FORCE BEHIND, KEREN LED THE WAY TOWARDS THE STRANGE MONSTERS' HAUNTS...
EVEN THOUGH YOU SAY THE REPULLUS CAN BE CONTROLLED, KEREN, THEY CAUSE A SHUDDER TO PASS THROUGH ME WHEN I SEE THEM.
IT IS FORTUNATE FOR US THAT THE FEW WHO KNOW HOW TO CONTROL THEM ARE AMONGST OUR MEN. WATCH!

AT AN ORDER FROM KEREN, SEVERAL OF HIS WARRIORS RAISED THEIR CONCHE-SHELL HORNS TO THEIR MOUTHS AND SOUNDED A LOUD, RASPING NOTE.
BY THE STARS! THEY ARE HIDEOUS CREATURES!
THEN, JUST AS IT SEEMED AS IF THEY MIGHT ALL BE DEVOURED, THE MEN CHANGED THE NOTE TO A SOFT, ALMOST GENTLE SOUND...
UGH! CALL THEM OFF!
AS IF BY MAGIC, THE HORRIBLE REPTILES SLIPPED SILENTLY BACK INTO THE SLIME.
WE DAVELIANS MAY LACK TECHNICAL SKILLS, BUT WE HAVE OTHER POWERS.
WHILE ROFFOLA AND HIS ARMY MOVED TOWARDS THE MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD...
YOU WERE RIGHT. NOW WE CAN TEACH THE SON OF IMBALA A LESSON.
KEREN AND HIS LOYAL WARRIORS SHEPHERDED THEIR STRANGE HERD INTO POSITION.
AT THE SAME TIME, A POWERFUL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS TAKING OFF FROM TRIGAN CITY, ITS MISSION TO FIND JANNO AND KEREN NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.
IT WAS HEADING FOR DAVELI, WHERE ITS ARRIVAL WOULD HAVE A RESULT THAT NO ONE COULD HAVE ANTICIPATED.

ON BOARD THE POWERFUL ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WERE TRIGO HIMSELF, AND HIS BROTHER, BRAG, THE FATHER OF JANNO.
WHEN OUR SCOUT CRAFT FOUND THOSE TWO SMASHED MACHINES, I FEARED THE WORST FOR JANNO, AND KEREN. WHY DO WE NOT TAKE THE AIR FLEET WITH US?
...AND WIPE OUT THE CAPITAL OF DAVELI, EH, BROTHER? NO... IN SO DOING WE MAY ENDANGER THE TWO OF THEM.
JANNO AND KEREN ARE YOUNG AND RESOURCEFUL... AND FROM THE MESSAGES THEY LEFT IT IS CERTAIN THEY HAVE BECOME INVOLVED IN THE REBELLION...
LET US HOPE THEY HAVE CHOSEN TO FIGHT ON THE SIDE OF JUSTICE AND FREEDOM...
WHILE THE APPROACHING ATMOSPHERE CRAFT WAS STILL SOME HOURS AWAY, ROFFOLA AND HIS REBEL WARRIORS SWEPT ACROSS THE PLAIN IN FRONT OF THE GUERILLAS' MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD.
CH-A-ARGE! TAKE NO PRISONERS...
DEATH TO IMBALA'S MEN!
DEATH TO PRINCE KEREN!
BUT WHEN THEY REACHED WHAT THEY THOUGHT WAS THE CAMPFIRE AREA OF KEREN'S MEN...
THEY ARE NOT HERE... WE HAVE BEEN TRICKED...
...AND WE HAVE LEFT THE CITY UNGUARDED... WE SHOULD RETURN AT ONCE...
ROFFOLA'S QUICK CHANGE OF MIND UPSET THE TIMING OF KEREN AND JANNO, WHO WERE AT THAT MOMENT DRIVING THE MONSTERS TOWARDS THE PLAIN...
WE'RE TOO LATE, JANNO... ROFFOLA AND HIS WARRIORS ARE ALREADY HEADING BACK TOWARDS THE CAPITAL...
WE MUST TURN THE MONSTERS ROUND... CAN YOU DO IT?
BUT WITHIN A MATTER OF MINUTES, JANNO REALISED THEIR WELL-LAID PLAN WAS GOING TO FAIL... THE MONSTERS WERE CRASHING TOWARDS THE PLAIN AT AN EVER-INCREASING SPEED... AND THERE WAS NO STOPPING THEM...

WHILE ROFFOLA AND HIS REBEL FORCES WERE GETTING CLEAR, AND WOULD SOON REGAIN THE CITY... THE MONSTERS CONTINUED THEIR HEADLONG RUSH...
IT IS NO USE, KEREN... THEY CANNOT HEAR THE NOTES...
THEN, SUDDENLY, OUT OF THE DISTANT SKY THEY HEARD A SOUND WHICH TRAINED PILOTS RECOGNISE INSTANTLY...
LISTEN... DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR? UP THERE...
BY THE STARS! AN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...
LOOK... THERE, ON THE PLAIN BELOW...
I SEE THEM... THE MONSTERS OF DAVELI... BUT THEY ARE CREATURES OF THE SWAMPLANDS. WHAT BRINGS THEM OUT ONTO THE PLAIN?
TRIGO SWUNG THE CONTROLS OF THE BIG MACHINE, AND WITH ITS ENGINES ROARING, THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT SWOOPED DOWN...
AS THE SHATTERING BARRIER OF SOUND ECHOED ACROSS THE OPEN PLAIN, IT HALTED THE MONSTERS IN THEIR TRACKS, AND SOME OF THEM BEGAN TO TURN...
WITHIN MINUTES, THE WHOLE HIDEOUS HERD WERE STAMPEDING.
IT IS A TRIGAN CRAFT... AND IT HAS TURNED THE MONSTERS...
YES... AND NOW THEY ARE HEADING FOR THE CITY!


WHILE THE MONSTERS THUNDERED AWAY TOWARDS THE CAPITAL OF DAVELI, JANNO AND KEREN WATCHED THE BIG TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT LAND...
BY THE SUNS OF ELEKTON, IT IS TRIGO, AND MY FATHER.
JANNO... KEREN... THANK THE GODS YOU ARE SAFE.

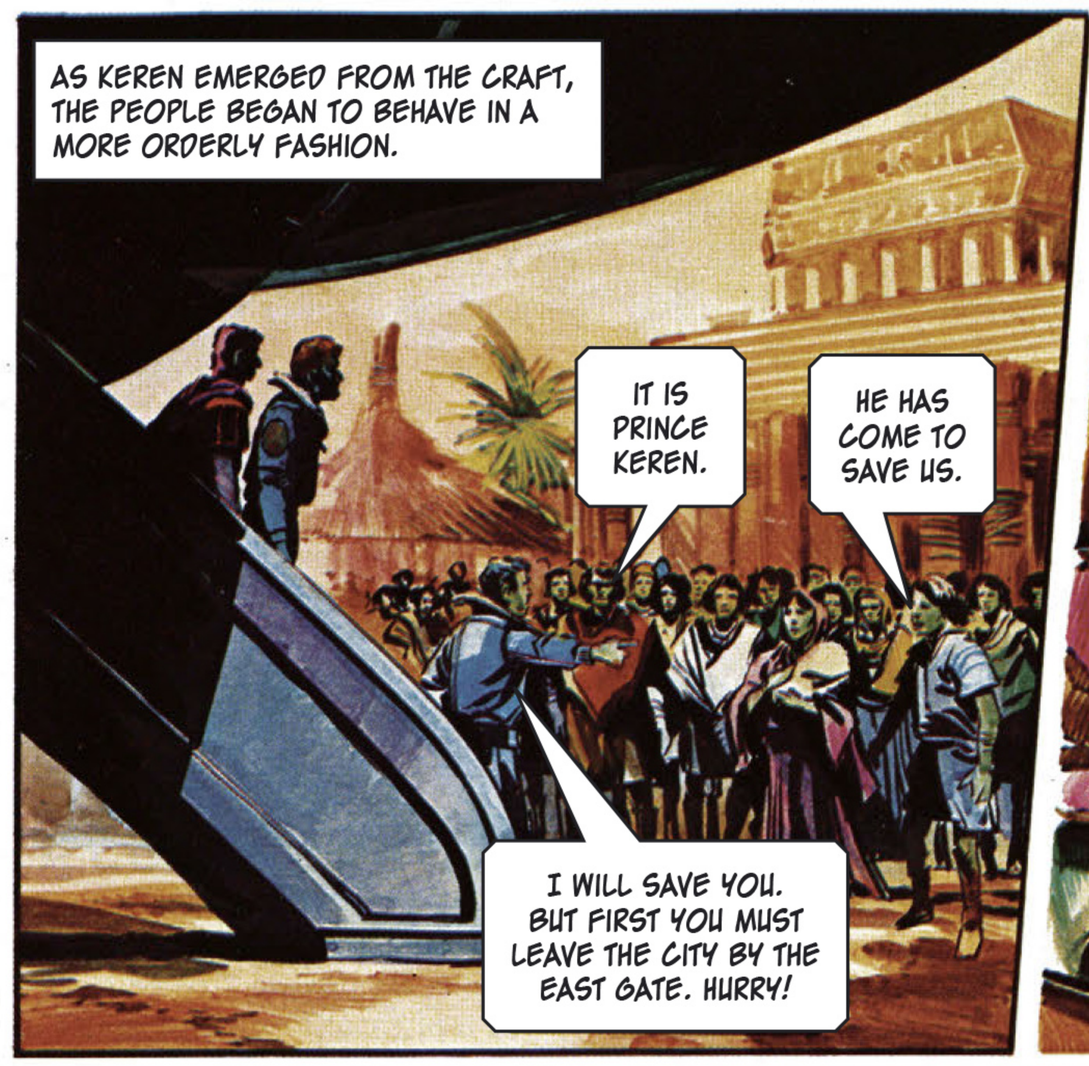

ON BOARD THE CRAFT JANNO AND KEREN QUICKLY EXPLAINED WHAT HAD HAPPENED AS TRIGO FLEW TOWARDS THE NEARBY JUNGLE CITY.
SO, ROFFOLA HAS FLED BACK TO THE CITY. I FEAR THERE WILL BE NO STOPPING THE MONSTERS NOW.
IF WE FLY AHEAD OF THEM, AT LEAST WE CAN WARN THE CITIZENS.

TRIGO BOOSTED THE ROCKET MOTORS, WHILE BELOW THEM IN THE JUNGLE A DREADFUL PRIMEVAL CHAOS REIGNED...

MEANWHILE, IN THE CITY, THE ADVANCE OF THE MONSTERS WAS ALREADY MAKING THE GROUND TREMBLE.
MAKE WAY, MAKE WAY!
DO I SEE A LOOK OF FEAR ON THE FACE OF THE TYRANT?
AYE... AND IT IS A FEAR WE SHOULD PERHAPS SHARE.

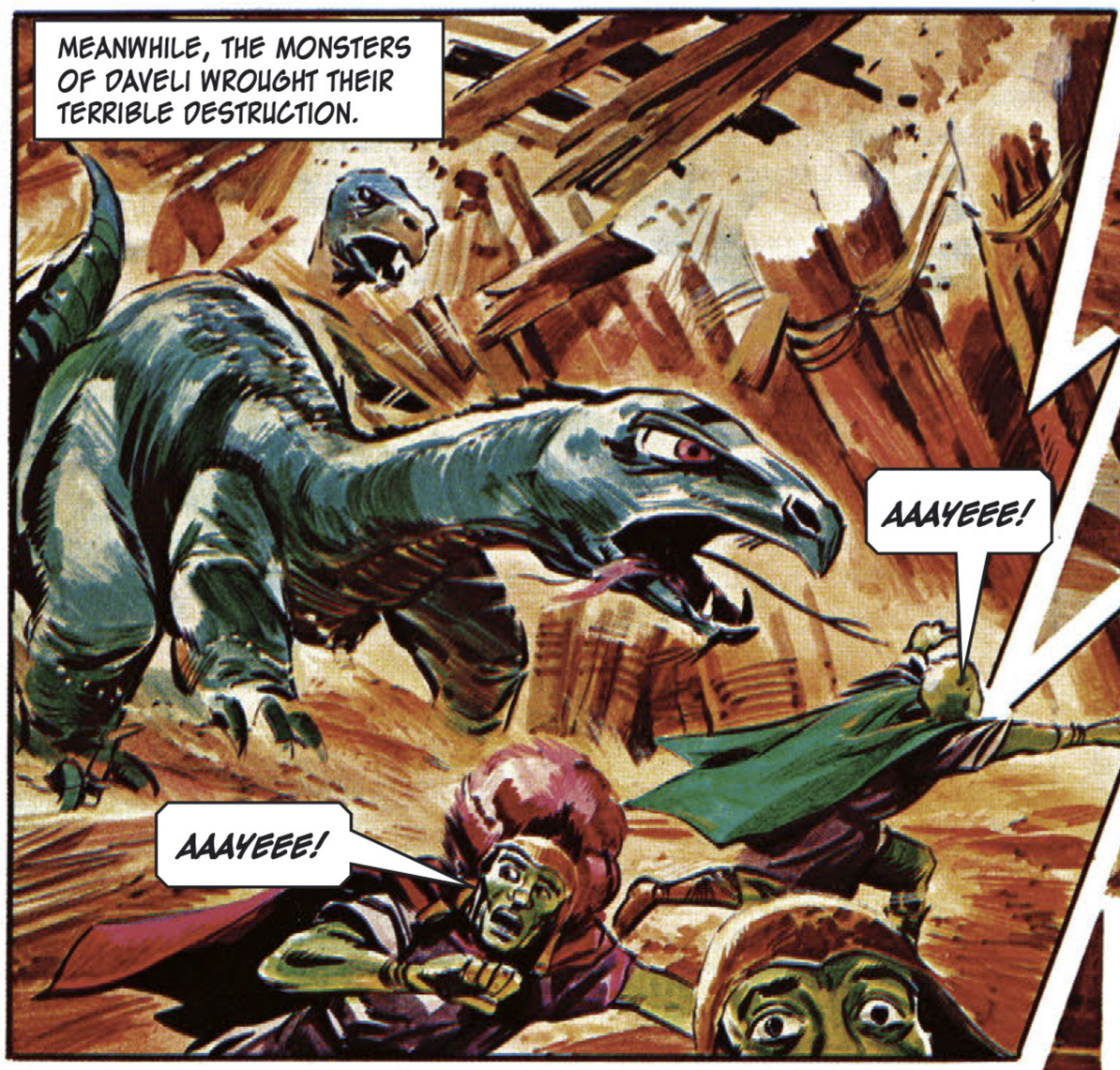
UNAWARE OF THE NATURE OF THE APPROACHING DANGER, THE PEOPLE OF DAVELI BEGAN TO SPECULATE.
I CAN FEEL THE EARTH BENEATH US MOVE!
IT IS AN EARTHQUAKE!
THE RIVER GODS ARE SEEKING REVENGE FOR THE EVIL DEEDS OF ROFFOLA.

SUDDENLY, THEY BEHELD TRIGO'S ATMOSPHERE CRAFT.
THE GODS HAVE COME FROM THE SKY.
RUN, BEFORE THEY DESTROY US ALL!


AS KEREN EMERGED FROM THE CRAFT, THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO BEHAVE IN A MORE ORDERLY FASHION.
IT IS PRINCE KEREN.
HE HAS COME TO SAVE US.
I WILL SAVE YOU. BUT FIRST YOU MUST LEAVE THE CITY BY THE EAST GATE. HURRY!

ROFFOLA, TOO, HAD HEARD THE ARRIVAL OF THE ATMOSPHERE CRAFT...
BY THE DEVILS OF DAVELI. CALL OUT THE GUARDS!

BUT MINUTES AFTER TRIGO HAD TAKEN OFF IN THE CRAFT, AND WAS RISING ABOVE THE CITY...
WELL DONE, KEREN. THE PEOPLE ARE CLEAR OF THE CITY.


MEANWHILE, THE MONSTERS OF DAVELI WROUGHT THEIR TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION.
AAAYEEE!
AAAYEEE!

AFTER HIS PALACE HAD PERISHED IN A CRESCENDO OF CRASHING TIMBERS, ROFFOLA AND HIS CHIEF MINISTER WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN.

WHEN CALM HAD AT LAST RETURNED, KEREN SPOKE TO THE LOYAL PEOPLE...
ROFFOLA HAS GONE AND MY FATHER HAS BEEN AVENGED. I AM NOW THE TRUE LEADER OF THE DAVELI NATION. IF YOU, THE PEOPLE WISH IT, I SHALL REMAIN WITH YOU ALWAYS...
AYE, WE WISH IT!
YOU MUST BE OUR KING!
LONG LIVE KING KEREN!

AND SO ENDED AN ADVENTURE THAT STRENGTHENED THE FRIENDSHIP OF TWO OLD COMRADES AND BOUND TWO NATIONS TOGETHER FOREVER.
NOW THE PEOPLE OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE WILL BE AS ONE WITH THE PEOPLE OF DAVELI.
MAY THE GODS OF ELEKTON ALWAYS SMILE UPON YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE.

LXXVIII

THE TRIGAN EMPIRE

THE HERICON/NIVATIAN CONFLICT

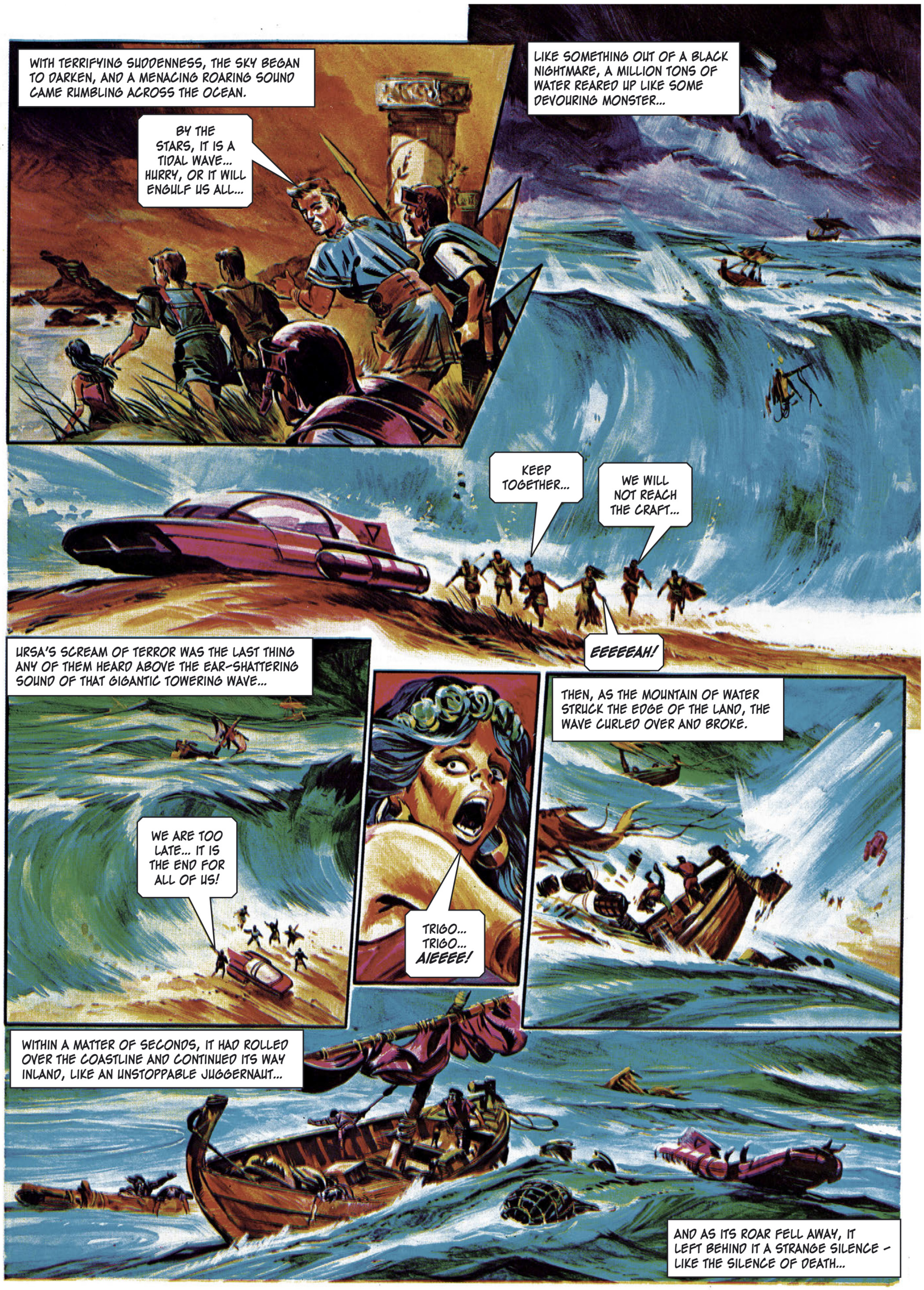
Originally published in ***Look and Learn*** 912 - 923

14th July – 29th September 1979

Story by Ken Roscoe

Art by Gerry Wood

THE TWO SUNS OF ELEKTON WERE WELL NIGH AT THEIR ZENITH, AS TRIGO AND HIS FAMILY DISPORTED THEMSELVES ON THE SANDY SHORE...
IT IS GOOD TO SEE OUR LEADER IN SUCH A HAPPY MOOD.
AYE, HE WELL DESERVES TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF PEACE.
AND THEN, AS JANNO AND HIS UNCLE TRIGO TRIED A FRIENDLY RACE IN THE SEA..
I DOUBT YOU CAN OUT PACE YOUR UNCLE, JANNO, YOUNG AS YOU ARE.
WE SHALL SEE...
TRIGO! I THINK THE GUARDS ARE SIGNALLING US...
IN ANSWER TO THE GUARDS' SUMMONS, THE FOUR OF THEM BEGAN TO WADE OUT OF THE WATER...
WHAT IS IT?
THERE IS SOME STRANGE CLOUD APPROACHING FROM THE EAST, MY LORD.
OH, IS THAT ALL?
OUT THERE, LORD TRIGO... DO YOU SEE IT?
YES... IT IS APPROACHING, BUT I DOUBT IT IS A CLOUD...
I'LL WAGER IT WAS SOME EXCUSE YOU ARRANGED TO AVOID RACING AGAINST ME, UNCLE.
BUT JANNO'S LIGHT-HEARTED JEST WENT UNHEEDED AS TRIGO BARKED OUT AN ORDER...
I LIKE IT NOT. WE MUST GET BACK TO THE LANDCRAFT, QUICKLY...


WITH TERRIFYING SUDDENNESS, THE SKY BEGAN TO DARKEN, AND A MENACING ROARING SOUND CAME RUMBLING ACROSS THE OCEAN.
BY THE STARS, IT IS A TIDAL WAVE... HURRY, OR IT WILL ENGULF US ALL...
LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A BLACK NIGHTMARE, A MILLION TONS OF WATER REARED UP LIKE SOME DEVOURING MONSTER...
KEEP TOGETHER...
WE WILL NOT REACH THE CRAFT...
EEEEEAH!
URSA'S SCREAM OF TERROR WAS THE LAST THING ANY OF THEM HEARD ABOVE THE EAR-SHATTERING SOUND OF THAT GIGANTIC TOWERING WAVE...
WE ARE TOO LATE... IT IS THE END FOR ALL OF US!
TRIGO... TRIGO... AIEEEE!
THEN, AS THE MOUNTAIN OF WATER STRUCK THE EDGE OF THE LAND, THE WAVE CURLED OVER AND BROKE.
WITHIN A MATTER OF SECONDS, IT HAD ROLLED OVER THE COASTLINE AND CONTINUED ITS WAY INLAND, LIKE AN UNSTOPPABLE JUGGERNAUT...
AND AS ITS ROAR FELL AWAY, IT LEFT BEHIND IT A STRANGE SILENCE – LIKE THE SILENCE OF DEATH...

IN THE SURGING WHITE MAELSTROM OF THE BREAKING WAVE, TRIGO MANAGED TO CLING TO HIS WIFE URSA.
FEELING AS IF HIS LUNGS WERE BEING CRUSHED IN A VICE, TRIGO EXERTED THE LAST OF HIS GREAT STRENGTH, AND...
BRAG! JANNO..! ARE YOU SAFE?
OVER HERE, BROTHER...
I AM HERE, TOO, UNCLE.
THANK THE STARS... BUT I FEAR URSA IS NEAR DROWNING...
MEANWHILE, ON THE DECK OF ONE OF THE TRIGAN FISHING VESSELS...
QUICKLY... PUT OUT THE OARS...
IT IS LORD TRIGO...
MANY EAGER HANDS WERE HELPING THEM ABOARD...
ARE THE GODS TRYING TO DESTROY US, LORD TRIGO?
NO, MY FRIEND... THE WAVE WAS CAUSED BY SOME CATASTROPHE IN NATURE... BUT AT PRESENT ONLY THE GODS KNOW WHAT DAMAGE IT MAY HAVE CAUSED... NOW HELP ME TO BRING BREATH BACK TO THE LADY URSA.

TOGETHER, THEY WORKED TO REVIVE TRIGO'S WIFE... AND SOON...
TRIGO... ARE WE ALL SAFE?
THAT WE ARE, NOW THAT YOU HAVE RETURNED TO US.
BUT THE TIDAL WAVE... IT WAS MOVING TOWARDS THE CITY.
AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE MASS OF WATER WHICH HAD SWEPT UP FROM THE GREAT OCEAN OF ELEKTON WAS SPENDING ITS FORCE ON THE HILLS UPON WHICH THE TRIGANS HAD SO WISELY BUILT THEIR CITY.
SLOWLY THE FLOOD WATERS SUCKED BACK INTO THE OCEAN, BUT AS THEY DID SO THE SHOCKED INHABITANTS OF TRIGAN CITY FELT ANOTHER SHIVER OF FEAR...
IT IS AN EARTHQUAKE!
FIRST THE WATER, AND NOW THIS... IT IS THE END OF ELEKTON.
FLOATING ON THE SEA, TRIGO AND HIS PARTY FELT NOTHING OF THE TREMORS WHICH WERE SHAKING THE CITY.
DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH SAIL TO DIRECT THE VESSEL TO THE NEAREST LAND, FISHERMAN?
IF THE WIND HOLDS, LORD TRIGO... WE SHALL REACH THE COAST IN A FEW HOURS... WHEREVER IT MAY BE!
IN TRIGAN CITY, OLD PERIC WAS READING MEASUREMENTS FROM HIS OWN SEISMOGRAPHIC INSTRUMENTS.
THE TREMORS HAVE CEASED, FATHER.
YES, FOR THE MOMENT. IT IS FORTUNATE FOR US THAT THE CENTRE OF THE DISTURBANCE IS SOME DISTANCE AWAY...
OUR CITY IS SAFE, BUT I WISH IT WERE POSSIBLE TO SAY THE SAME FOR THE LORD TRIGO AND THE OTHERS...

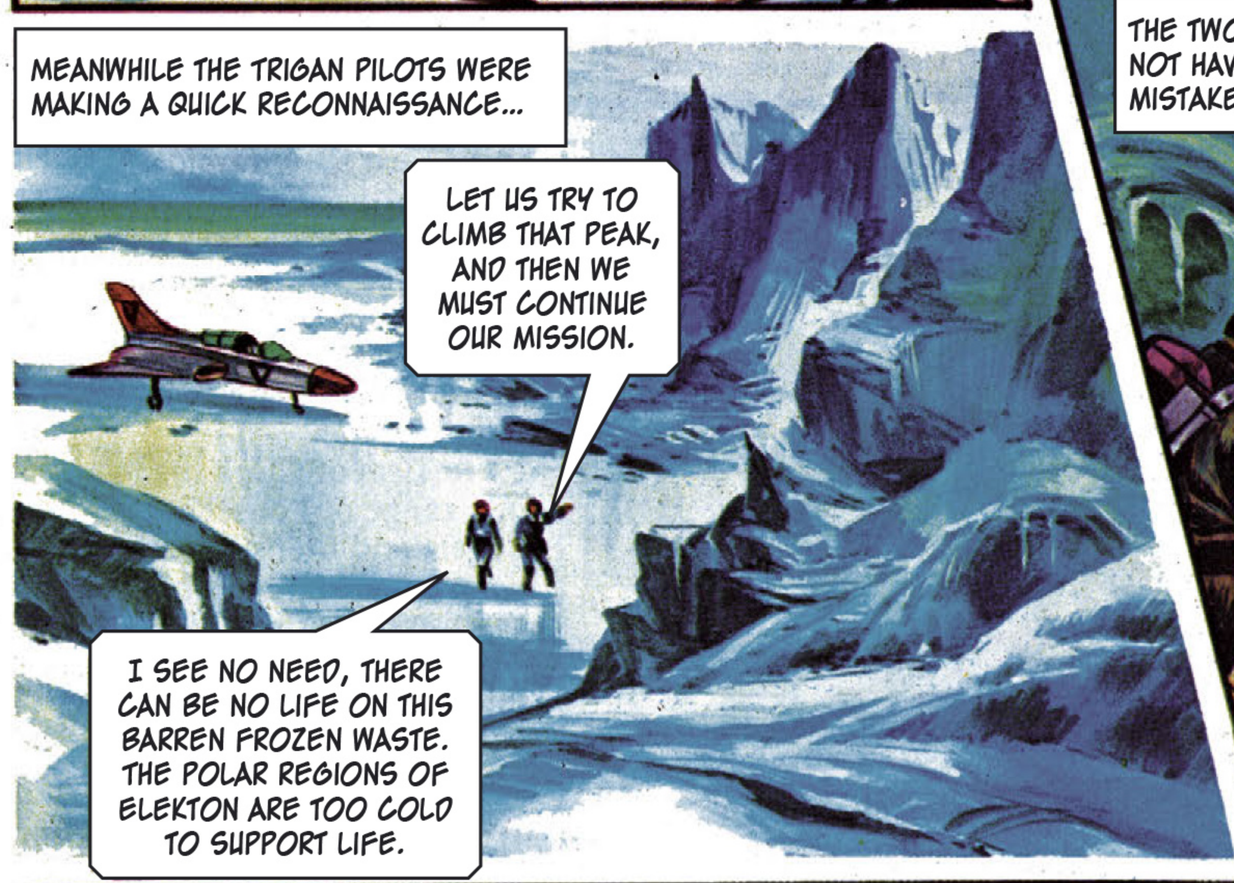
WHILE PERIC AND SALVIA KEPT WATCH FROM THE WALLS OF TRIGAN CITY...
THE GREAT WAVE IS RETURNING TO THE OCEAN FROM WHENCE IT CAME, AND WITH ALMOST EQUAL FORCE.
LET US PRAY THAT THE GODS HAVE SPARED LORD TRIGO AND THE OTHERS.
THE FISHING VESSEL THAT HAD SAVED TRIGO'S ILL-FATED PARTY FROM THE TIDAL WAVE, WAS ONCE AGAIN IN DIFFICULTIES...
IT IS THE BACKWASH OF THE TIDAL WAVE... WE'LL BE SAFE ONCE IT HAS PASSED...
AYE... IF THE TIMBERS OF THIS COCKLESHELL DO NOT SPLIT ASUNDER!
FOR WHAT SEEMED A LIFETIME, BUT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF MINUTES, THEY WERE ALL FLUNG ABOUT HELPLESS AGAINST THE IMMENSE FORCE OF NATURE...
BY THE STARS... WE SHALL BE SWEPT TO OUR DEATH!
HOLD FAST...
THEN, AT LAST, WITH ITS FORCE SPENT, THE HUGE MASS OF WATER PASSED THEM BY AND SPREAD OUT UPON THE FACE OF THE GREAT OCEAN.
THE DANGER HAS PASSED, TRIGO.
YES, BROTHER... BUT WHAT OF OUR PEOPLE, AND THE TRIGAN CITY?
...A FEW HOURS LATER, MUCH OF TRIGO'S FEAR HAD BEEN ALLAYED...
IT IS A LANDCRAFT, UNCLE... WE ARE SAFE!
AND THE CITY LOOKS UNDAMAGED.

BUT WHEN OLD PERIC TOLD TRIGO THE RESULTS OF HIS CALCULATIONS, HIS FEARS BEGAN TO RETURN...
THE EARTHQUAKE WAS OF THE GREATEST MAGNITUDE EVER KNOWN ON ELEKTON. IT BEGAN HERE... BARELY FIFTY LEAGUES FROM HERICON... I SHUDDER TO THINK WHAT IT COULD HAVE DONE TO THE CITY.
THE LADY URSA, TRIGO'S WIFE, WAS HERSELF A HERICON AND THE SISTER OF ITS RULER, KING ASSAR...
HERICON WAS BUILT ALONG THE COAST AT SEA LEVEL... THE TIDAL WAVE WOULD DROWN THE WHOLE CITY.
MY POOR BROTHER, KASSAR... AND MY PEOPLE!
WE MUST HELP THEM, TRIGO... NOT JUST BECAUSE OF MY BROTHER... WE HAVE A TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE OF HERICON...
OF COURSE WE WILL DO ALL IN OUR POWER TO AID THEM, MY LOVE... I WILL ARRANGE AT ONCE FOR ONE OF OUR ATMOSPHERE CRAFT TO SURVEY THE AREA. IN THE MEANTIME WE HAVE REPAIRS TO CARRY OUT IN OUR OWN CITY.
AND SO, THAT SAME AFTERNOON, TWO EXPERIENCED TRIGAN PILOTS WERE BRIEFED.
YOUR ORDERS ARE CLEAR... FLY OVER THE AREA, BUT DO NOT LAND LEST THE HERICONS THINK WE ARE HOSTILE. RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
...AND YOU MUST LOOK WELL TO THE EAST FOR IT WAS FROM THAT DIRECTION THAT THE TIDAL WAVE BEGAN ITS JOURNEY...
FOR HOURS THE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FLEW ACROSS THE GREAT OCEAN OF ELEKTON.
WE HAVE SEEN NOTHING SINCE LEAVING BASE.
LET'S ALTER COURSE AS OLD PERIC SUGGESTED... WE CAN APPROACH HERICON FROM THE WEST AT A LOWER ALTITUDE.
FOR THIRTY MINUTES THEY FLEW EASTWARDS, AND THEN...
LOOK! THERE, TEN LEAGUES AHEAD...
BY THE PLANETS! IT... IT CAN'T BE...

SHOCKED BY WHAT THEY HAD DISCOVERED BELOW THEM, THE TWO TRIGAN AIR FORCE PILOTS BEGAN A SLOW CIRCLE ROUND...
IT IS A SHEET OF ICE AS BIG AS A CONTINENT... I DO NOT UNDERSTAND... WE CANNOT BE OVER THE POLAR REGION...
I WILL CHECK OUR POSITION ON THE AUTO-NAVIGATOR...
THE INSTRUMENTS ARE CORRECT... WE ARE 200 LEAGUES TO THE EAST OF HERICON.
THEN IT MUST BE SOME EFFECT OF THE TIDAL WAVE.
THE TIDAL WAVE?
YES - ITS FORCE MUST HAVE CAUSED THIS ENORMOUS SHEET OF ICE TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE NORTHERN ICE-CAP.
STILL FINDING IT HARD TO BELIEVE THEIR EYES, THE TRIGAN PILOTS DECIDED TO MAKE A LANDING ON THE ICE SHEET...
NEVER DID I EXPECT TO SEE SUCH A SIGHT IN MY LIFETIME...
NOR I... BUT IF YOU ARE CORRECT ABOUT THIS BREAKING OFF FROM THE POLAR ICE CAP... THEN THE OCEAN CURRENTS CAN TAKE IT ONLY ONE WAY...
...TOWARDS HERICON?
...THAT'S RIGHT... AND THAT MAY MEAN A WORSE DISASTER THAN THEY MAY ALREADY HAVE SUFFERED.

AND IN HERICON, THERE HAS INDEED BEEN A MOST TERRIBLE DISASTER...

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, KING KASSAR WAS ENDEAVOURING TO RALLY HIS SHOCKED SUBJECTS...
THERE IS NO WAY OF BEING CERTAIN, BUT MANY THOUSANDS OF OUR CITIZENS HAVE PERISHED, OUR MAJESTY, AND OUR GREAT CITY IS ALMOST TOTALLY DESTROYED.
THEN WE MUST REBUILD IT... NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES.

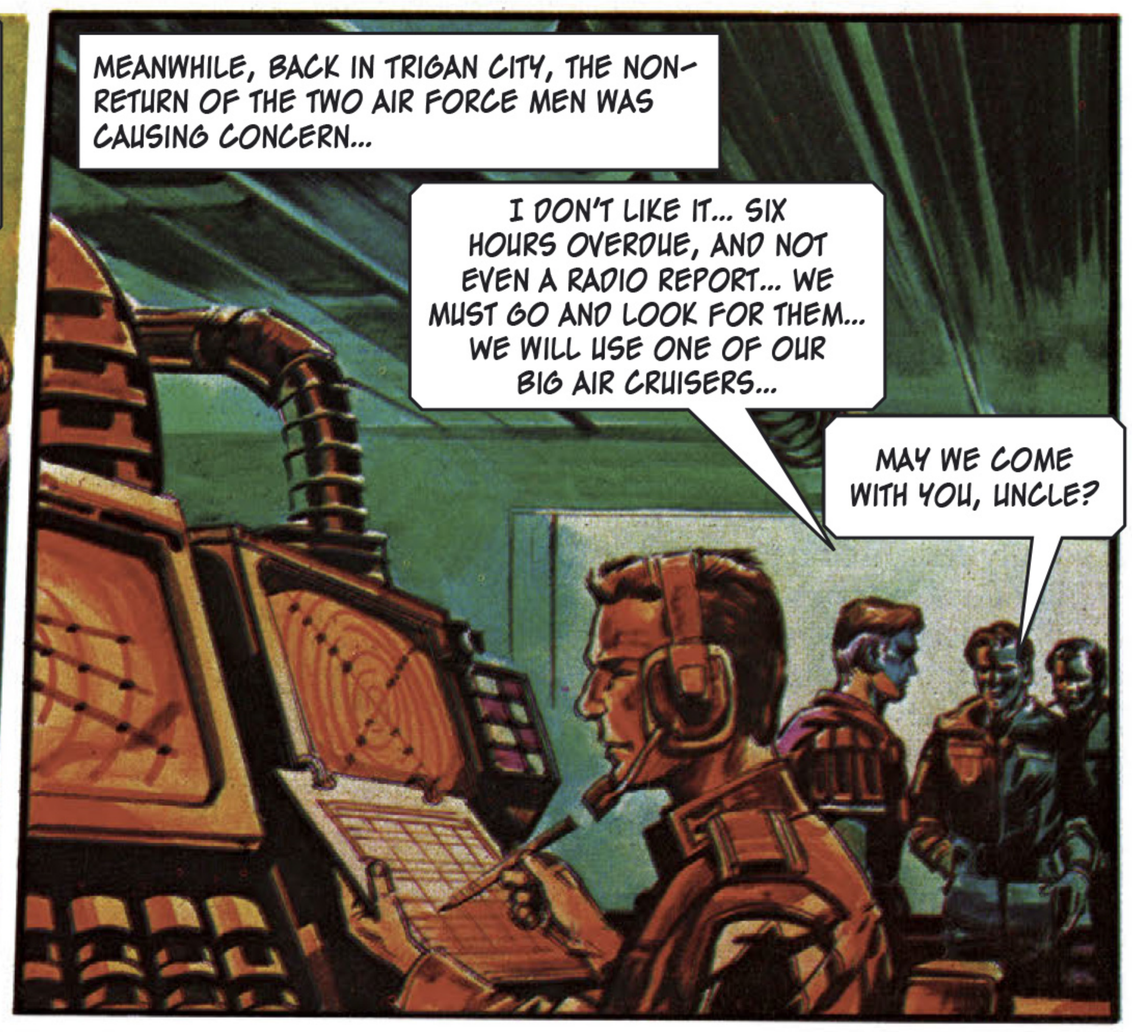

MEANWHILE THE TRIGAN PILOTS WERE MAKING A QUICK RECONNAISSANCE...
LET US TRY TO CLIMB THAT PEAK, AND THEN WE MUST CONTINUE OUR MISSION.
I SEE NO NEED, THERE CAN BE NO LIFE ON THIS BARREN FROZEN WASTE. THE POLAR REGIONS OF ELEKTON ARE TOO COLD TO SUPPORT LIFE.

THE TWO MEN COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE MISTAKEN...
THEY HAVE SOME KIND OF FLYING MACHINE... WE MUST PREVENT THEM FROM LEAVING OR ELSE THEY WILL BRING MORE OF THEIR KIND.

BY THE GODS OF VICTRIS... WHAT ARE THEY?
MAKE FOR THE SHIP...

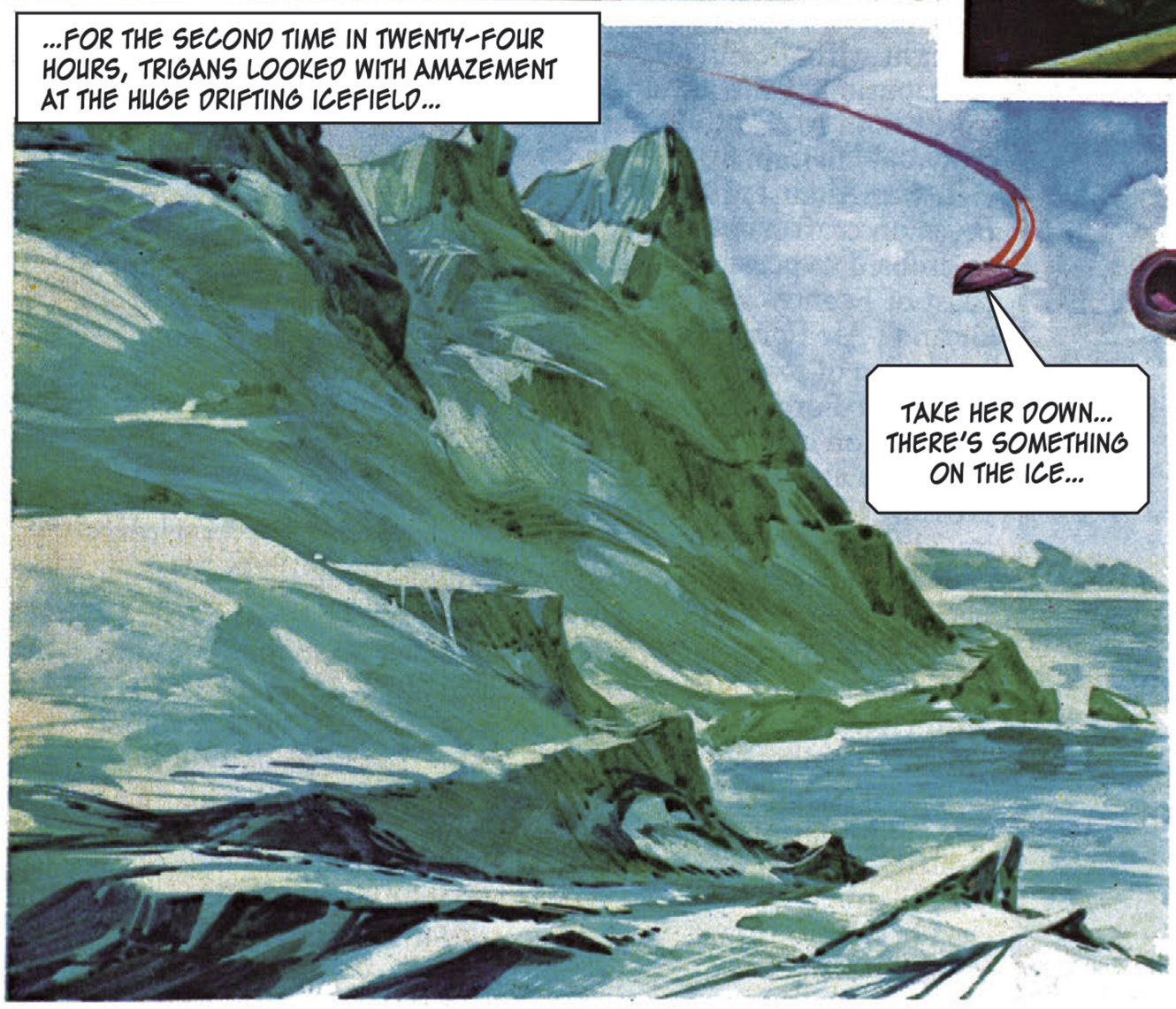
THE STRANGE CREATURES OPENED FIRE WITH FREEZER GUNS BEFORE THE TRIGAN AIR FORCE PILOTS HAD A CHANCE TO REACT TO THEIR SUDDEN APPEARANCE...
OOOAHGH!
AAAAAH!
WITHIN SECONDS THEY WERE ENVELOPED IN A COATING OF ICE...
WE MUST REPORT BACK TO KING NIVATUS... HE MUST BE TOLD OF THIS.
THEIR FLYING MACHINE... THAT MUST BE DEALT WITH, TOO.
AND THEN THE TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT RECEIVED THE SAME TREATMENT...
YOU REMAIN BY THE CAVERN ENTRANCE, CALVOR, AND KEEP WATCH.
DEEP IN ITS INTERIOR, THE HUGE FLOATING SHEET OF ICE AND ITS ASSOCIATED BERGS WAS HONEYCOMBED WITH PASSAGEWAYS AND STRANGELY BEAUTIFUL CATHEDRAL-LIKE HALLS, ALL LIT WITH A GREENISH BLUE FLUORESCENT LIGHT.
THE LEADER OF THIS RACE OF ICE PEOPLE WAS KING NIVATUS, USUALLY A CALM AND KINDLY MAN, BUT ON HEARING WHAT THE TWO GUARDS HAD TO SAY...
SO, IT IS AS WE FEARED... BY SOME MEANS WHICH REMAINS A MYSTERY, THE LAND-MEN HAVE BROUGHT OUR ICE-HOME CLOSE TO THEIR SHORES... AND NOW THEY ARE PREPARING TO ATTACK US...
IT IS THE GREATEST DISASTER OUR PEOPLE HAVE EVER FACED, YOUR MAJESTY.
WHAT WE MUST DISCOVER IS WHICH OF THE LAND-MEN ARE OUR ENEMIES... THESE AIR-MAN... WERE THEY FROM HERICON? I HAVE HEARD THAT KING KASSAR IS A MAN TO BE RECKONED WITH...

THERE IS NO WAY OF BEING SURE, YOUR MAJESTY... BUT IT SEEMS WE ARE DRIFTING TOWARDS THE LAND OF HERICON.
THEN IT IS TO HERICON THAT WE MUST TURN OUR ATTENTION, AND STRIKE THEM BEFORE THEY COMPLETE THEIR PLANS FOR OUR DESTRUCTION.


MEANWHILE, BACK IN TRIGAN CITY, THE NON-RETURN OF THE TWO AIR FORCE MEN WAS CAUSING CONCERN...
I DON'T LIKE IT... SIX HOURS OVERDUE, AND NOT EVEN A RADIO REPORT... WE MUST GO AND LOOK FOR THEM... WE WILL USE ONE OF OUR BIG AIR CRUISERS...
MAY WE COME WITH YOU, UNCLE?

OF COURSE - WHO ELSE WOULD I TRUST TO PILOT THE LEADER OF THE TRIGAN EMPIRE?

FOLLOWING THE TRACK TAKEN BY THEIR RECONNAISSANCE CRAFT, JANNO PILOTS THE BATTLE CRUISER TOWARDS HERICON. THEN THE NAVIGATOR GAVE A CRY OF ALARM.
LOOK AT THIS... ARE WE OFF TRACK?
THESE BIG BOYS DON'T MAKE NAVIGATIONAL ERRORS. WHAT IS IT?
ALTER COURSE... LET'S TAKE A LOOK.


...FOR THE SECOND TIME IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, TRIGANS LOOKED WITH AMAZEMENT AT THE HUGE DRIFTING ICEFIELD...
TAKE HER DOWN... THERE'S SOMETHING ON THE ICE...

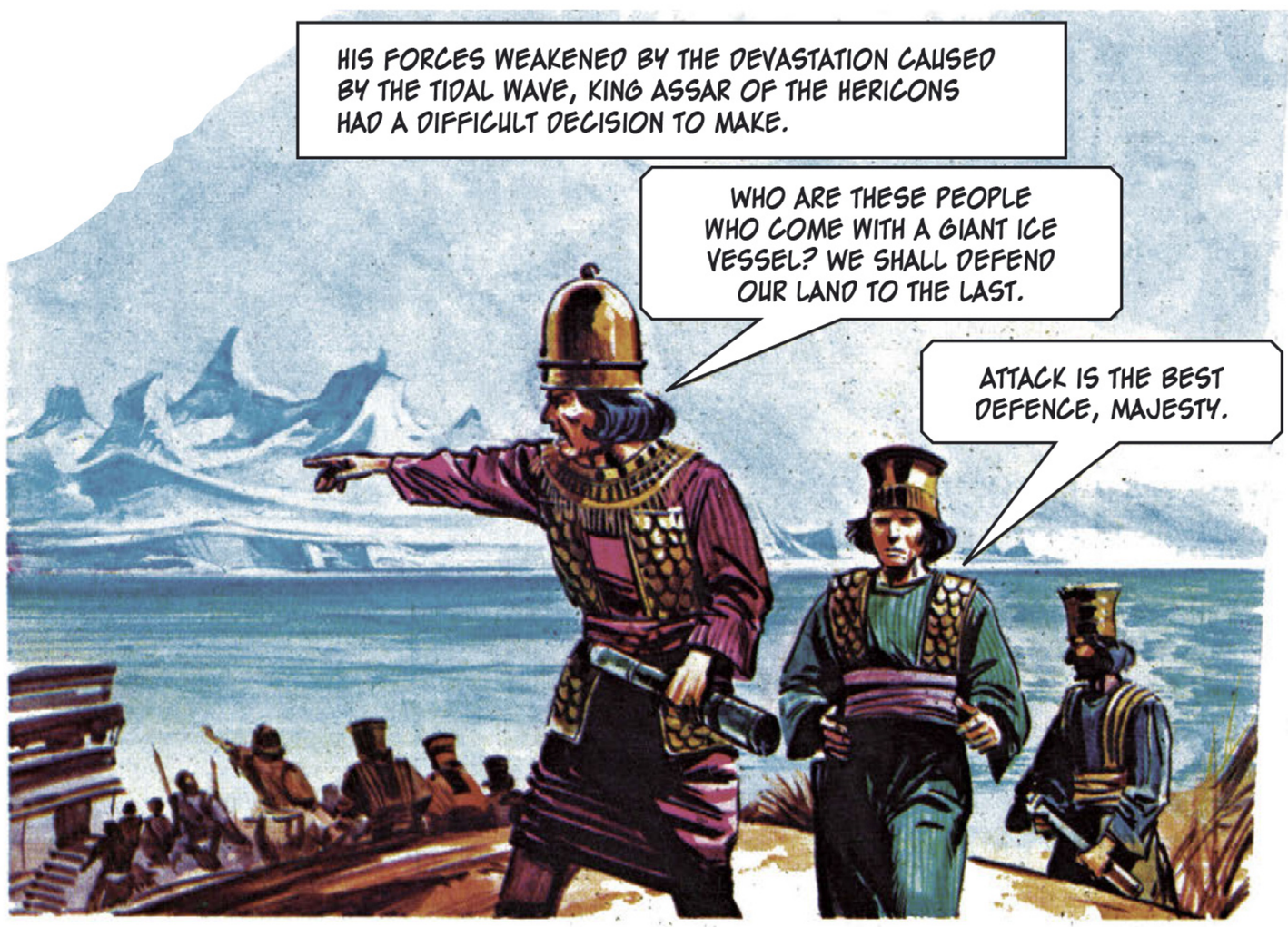
BUT THIS TIME, THE ICE PEOPLE WERE READY FOR INTRUDERS...
STAND-BY TO FIRE AT MAXIMUM PRESSURE!

AS JANNO BROUGHT THE AIR CRUISER GENTLY DOWN TOWARDS THE ICE FIELD...
TAKE HER UP, JANNO... FULL BOOST!
DISCHARGE!
JANNO'S QUICK REACTION SAVED THE BIG ATMOSPHERE CRAFT FROM DESTRUCTION...
SWING ROUND AND LET'S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK.
BUT WHO AND WHAT ARE THEY, SIR?
THE ICEMEN RECHARGED AND PREPARED TO TAKE ANOTHER SHOT AT THE TRIGAN CRAFT, BUT...
THAT'S STOPPED THEIR LITTLE GAME!
MAKE ANOTHER RUN OVER THE GUN POSITION, JANNO. I'M GOING TO TRY AND SEAL UP THAT CAVERN.

ONE THING THE ICEMEN COULD NOT WITHSTAND WAS HEAT...
AAAAAH!
AYEEE!
AS THE HUGE BLOCKS OF ICE MELTED, THE ICEMEN SEALED THE CAVERN WITH THEIR FREEZING WEAPONS...
FALL BACK. GET BELOW.
TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO BE ATTACKED AGAIN, TRIGO CONCENTRATED A BEAM ON THE ICE WITH DEVASTATING EFFECT.
TRIGO AND HIS MEN LANDED AND BEGAN A SEARCH FOR THE SEVERED PORTION OF THE ICE.
I FEAR THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE OF THE AIRMEN REMAINING ALIVE.
YET I BELIEVE THEM TO BE DEAD. IT IS BEST THAT WE LEAVE THEM.
THEY DO NOT SEEM TO BEAR ANY WOUNDS, UNCLE.
AS TRIGO AND HIS PARTY TURNED SADLY AWAY...
WE MUST CONTINUE OUR JOURNEY TO HERICON.

AS TRIGO AND THE OTHERS WERE RETURNING TO THE AIR CRUISER, JANNO HEARD A SUDDEN CRY.
WAIT, THEY ARE ALIVE!
BY THE STARS!
QUICKLY, THEY CARRIED THE TWO PILOTS ABROAD THE CRUISER.
WE MUST MAKE ALL SPEED BACK TO TRIGAN CITY. THESE MEN WILL NEED SPECIAL TREATMENT. HERICON MUST WAIT.
THE BIG TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT CLIMBED AWAY.
THE LAND PEOPLE ARE STRONG, CALVOR. HOW CAN WE EVER BEAT THEM?
BY LEARNING TO FIGHT BETTER, MY FRIEND.
IN TRIGAN CITY, THE TWO PILOTS WERE PLACED UNDER MEDICAL CARE.
THEIR BLOOD STILL HAS SOME TINY ICE-CRYSTALS IN IT. THEY WERE FROZEN IN A MATTER OF SECONDS BY WHATEVER WEAPON WAS USED.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT, PERIC?
A GUN CAPABLE OF FIRING A SUPER-COLD FLUID WHICH FREEZES BUT DOES NOT KILL. IF MY MEMORY SERVES ME WELL THESE PEOPLE ARE NIVATIANS. BUT I MUST CONSULT MY BOOKS TO LEANT MORE ABOUT THEM, LORD TRIGO.

TRIGO ACCOMPANIED PERIC TO HIS STUDY, WHERE TRIGO'S WIFE, URSA, JOINED THEM.
THE GREAT WAVE BROUGHT THE ICE FROM THE POLE, AND THE PEOPLE WITH IT...
THEY ARE INDEED NIVATIANS, A PEACEFUL RACE WHO HAVE LIVED FOR MANY MILLENNIUMS UNDER THE ICE WHICH COVERS THE POLAR CONTINENT.
I SEE IT IS ALSO WRITTEN THAT, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE CONTACT WITH OTHER RACES ON OUR PLANET, THEY HAVE A DEEP DISTRUST OF ALL LAND PEOPLE.
IT SEEMS THESE ICE-PEOPLE MEAN NO HARM, BUT FEAR MAY DRIVE THEM TO DO MUCH DAMAGE. OUR SURVEY PILOTS CONFIRMED THAT THE ICE-FLOW IS MOVING TO YOUR BROTHER'S LAND. SOMEHOW WE MUST FIND A WAY OF PREVENTING A TRAGIC CONFLICT.
I HAVE HEARD MY BROTHER, KASSAR, SPEAK OF THEM. THEY ATTACK ALL WHO APPROACH THEM, YET THEIR WEAPONS DO NOT ALWAYS KILL. BUT WHO CAN TELL WHAT MAY HAPPEN IF THEY REACH HERICON?
EVEN AS TRIGO WAS SPEAKING, KING KASSAR OF HERICON WAS LOOKING WITH INCREDULITY AS THE ICE MOVED RELENTLESSLY TOWARDS THE SHATTERED COASTLINE OF HIS COUNTRY.
DO MY EYES PLAY TRICKS OR DO I SEE MEN WITH WEAPONS?
IT IS AN INVASION FORCE, ALL HIGHEST. WE ARE ABOUT TO BE ATTACKED.


HIS FORCES WEAKENED BY THE DEVASTATION CAUSED BY THE TIDAL WAVE, KING ASSAR OF THE HERICONS HAD A DIFFICULT DECISION TO MAKE.
WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE WHO COME WITH A GIANT ICE VESSEL? WE SHALL DEFEND OUR LAND TO THE LAST.
ATTACK IS THE BEST DEFENCE, MAJESTY.

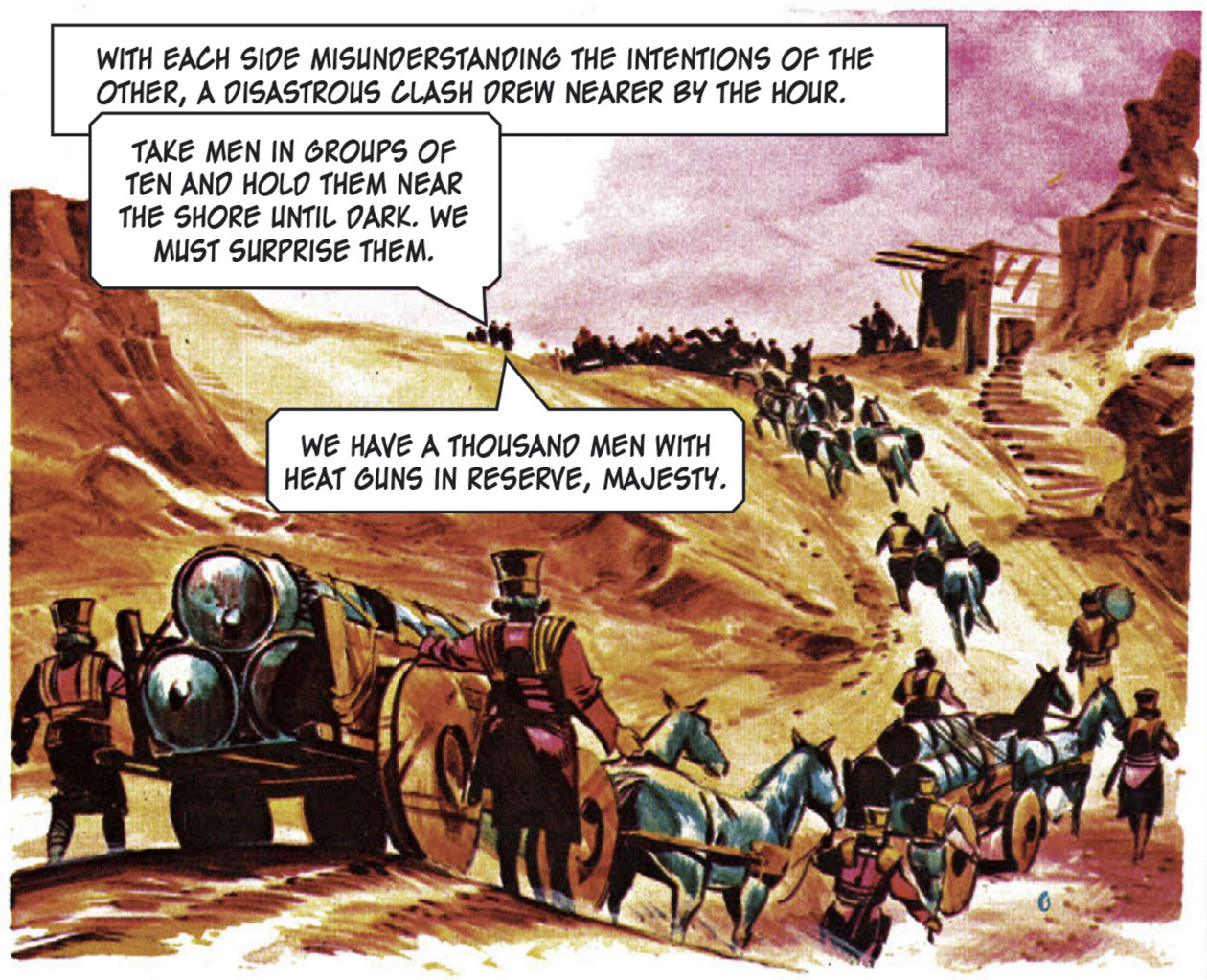
DO YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT, FOOL! BUT WE ARE SHORT OF WEAPONS; THE GREAT WAVE WIPED OUT OUR FLEET AND DESTROYED ALL OUR ATMOSPHERE CRAFT. HOW CAN WE RISK ATTACKING A SUPERIOR FORCE?

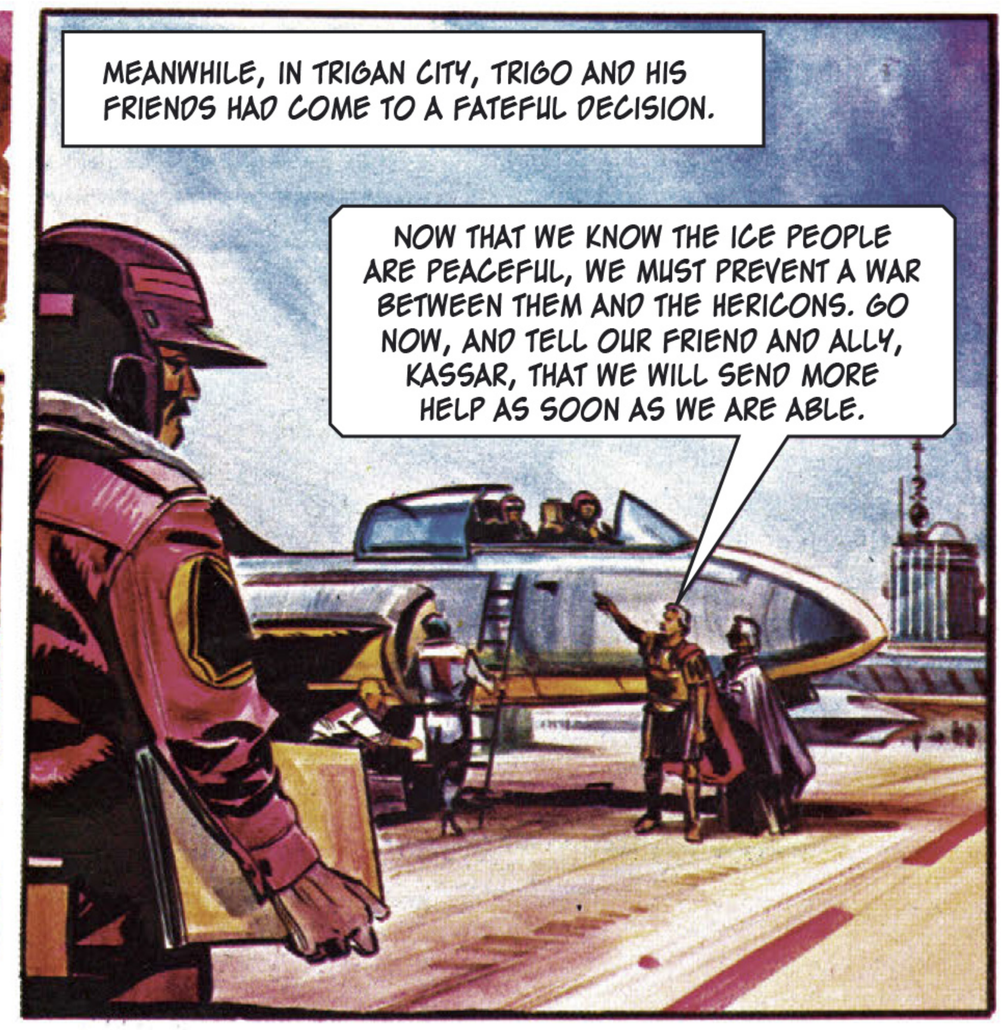
AS THE SUNS OF ELEKTON RISE, THEIR ICE VESSEL WILL SURELY MELT. PERHAPS WE CAN SPEED UP THE PROCESS, MAJESTY?
BY THE STARS, ROLVAR, YOU ARE RIGHT. NOW I KNOW WHAT WE CAN DO!

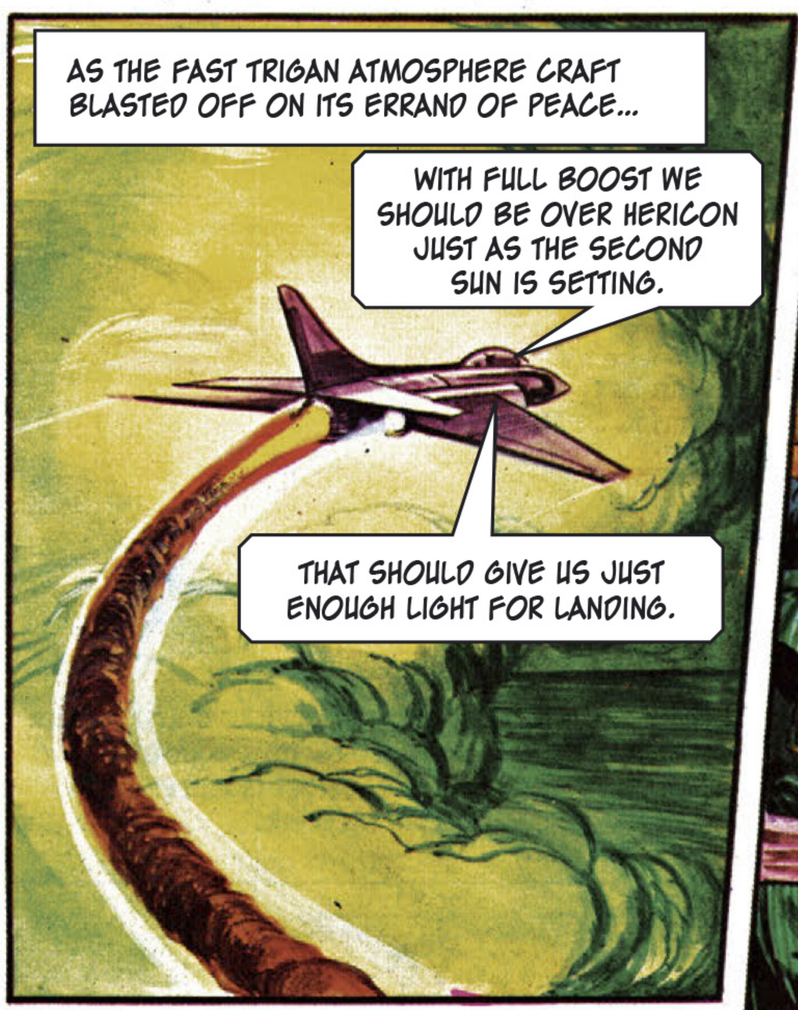
EVEN IF OUR GUNS ARE OUT OF ACTION, WE STILL HAVE THE FUEL FOR THEM. WE WILL FIGHT ICE WITH FIRE.
I WILL ALSO SEARCH FOR WEAPONS, MAJESTY.

WHILE KASSAR AND HIS MEN MADE THEIR DESPERATE PLANS, THE UNFORTUNATE ICE PEOPLE TRIED TO MAKE THEIRS.
OUR LOOKOUTS REPORT A MOVEMENT OF HERICONS TOWARDS THE COAST. THE TWIN SUNS ARE NOW NEARING THEIR ZENITH.
THEN THEY SURELY PLAN TO ATTACK US. IT IS A PITY THAT WE CANNOT ASSURE THEM OF OUR PEACEFUL INTENTIONS.

WE WILL NOT STRIKE THE FIRST BLOW. WE NEED THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE LAND PEOPLE TO HELP US RETURN TO OUR NATURAL SURROUNDINGS IN THE FAR NORTH.
BUT WE ARE ONLY SAFE AS LONG AS SUFFICIENT ICE REMAINS TO GIVE US SHELTER. IN THESE LATITUDES THAT MAY BE A FEW WEEKS, PERHAPS ONLY DAYS.

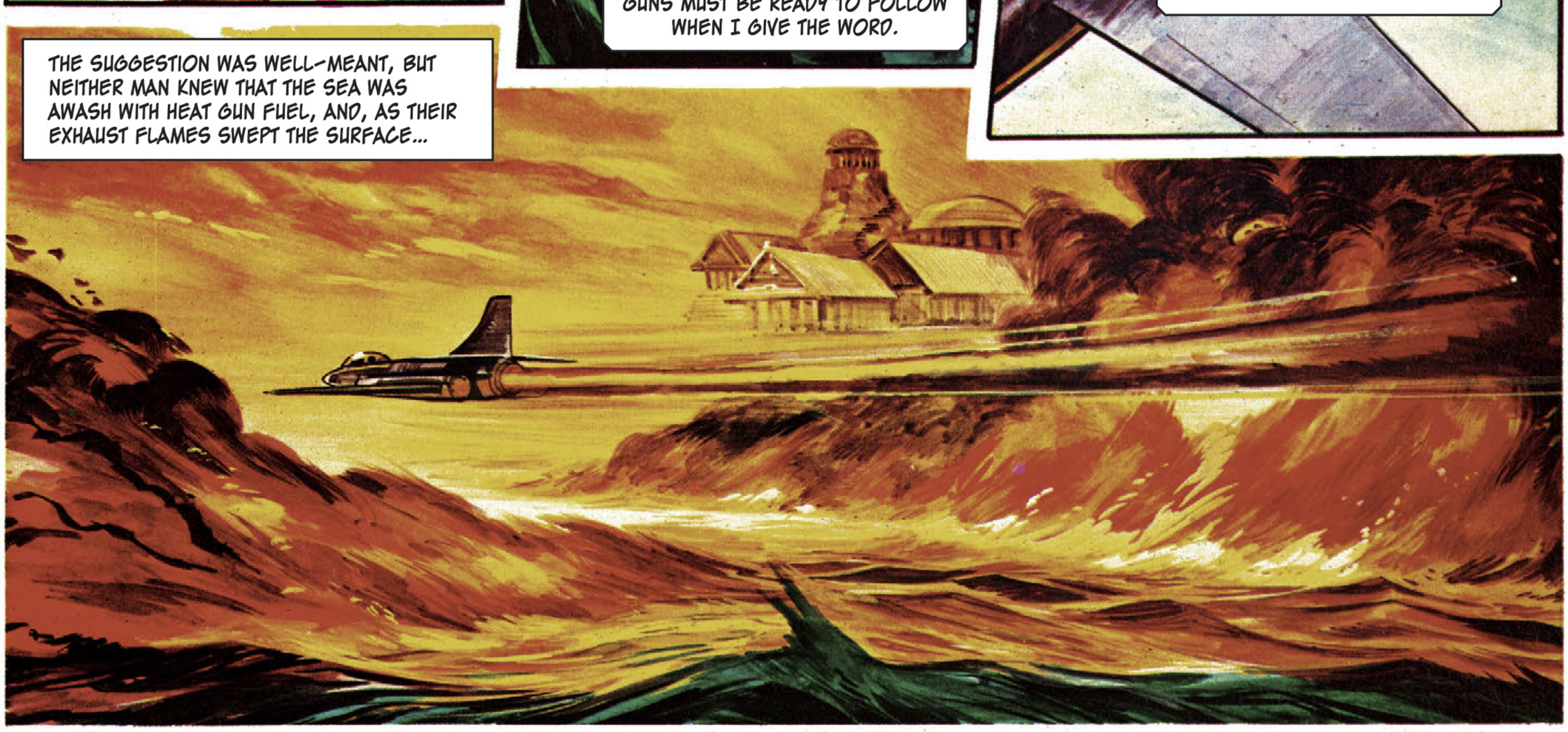

WITH EACH SIDE MISUNDERSTANDING THE INTENTIONS OF THE OTHER, A DISASTROUS CLASH DREW NEARER BY THE HOUR.
TAKE MEN IN GROUPS OF TEN AND HOLD THEM NEAR THE SHORE UNTIL DARK. WE MUST SURPRISE THEM.
WE HAVE A THOUSAND MEN WITH HEAT GUNS IN RESERVE, MAJESTY.


MEANWHILE, IN TRIGAN CITY, TRIGO AND HIS FRIENDS HAD COME TO A FATEFUL DECISION.
NOW THAT WE KNOW THE ICE PEOPLE ARE PEACEFUL, WE MUST PREVENT A WAR BETWEEN THEM AND THE HERICONS. GO NOW, AND TELL OUR FRIEND AND ALLY, KASSAR, THAT WE WILL SEND MORE HELP AS SOON AS WE ARE ABLE.

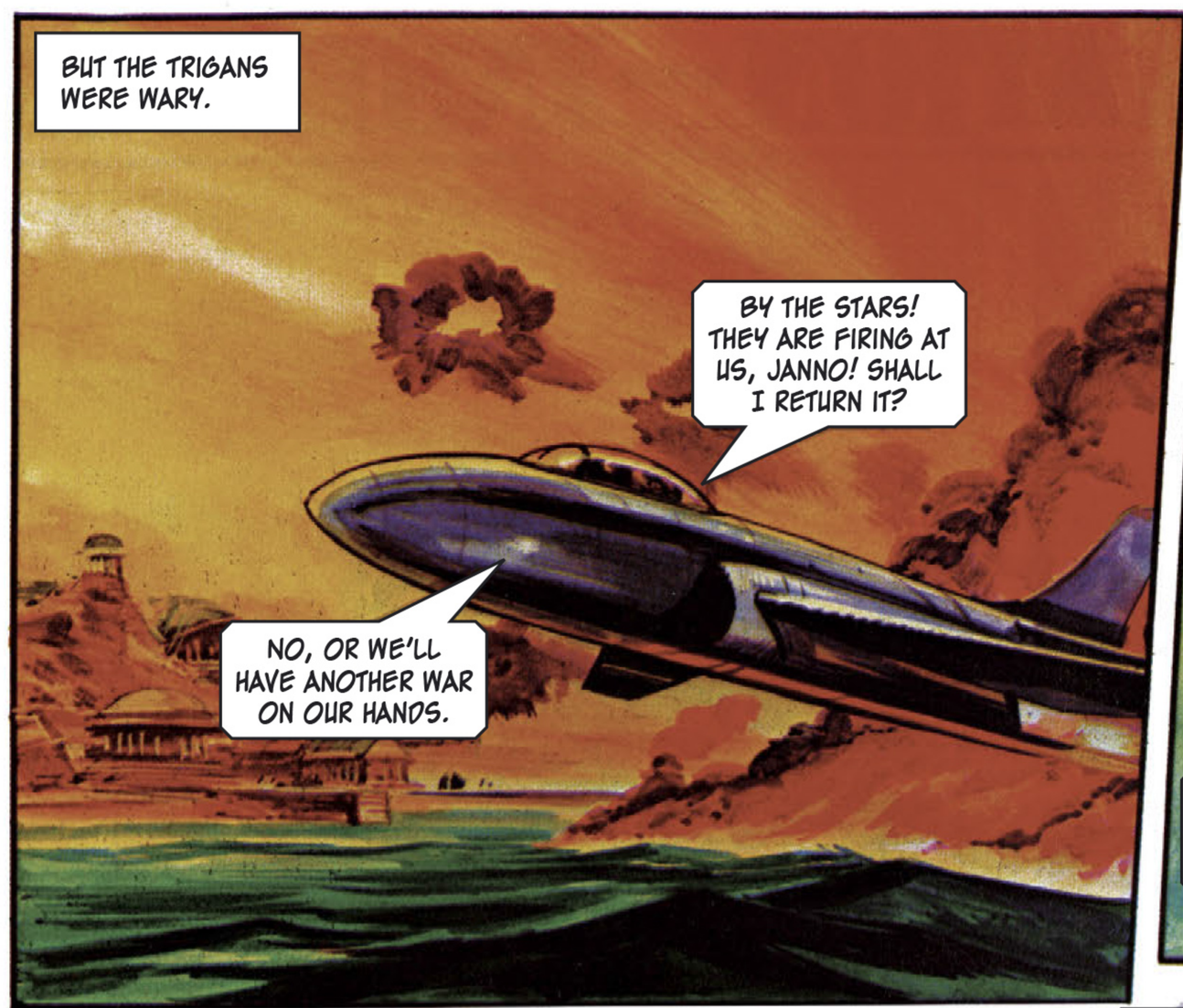

AS THE FAST TRIGAN ATMOSPHERE CRAFT BLASTED OFF ON ITS ERRAND OF PEACE...
WITH FULL BOOST WE SHOULD BE OVER HERICON JUST AS THE SECOND SUN IS SETTING.
THAT SHOULD GIVE US JUST ENOUGH LIGHT FOR LANDING.

...THE HERICONS WERE POISED TO POUR THOUSANDS OF GALLONS OF HEAT GUN FUEL ONTO THE SEA SEPARATING THEM FROM THE GREAT ICEBERG.
RELEASE THE FUEL AT SECOND SUNSET, ROLVAR. THAT WILL GIVE IT TIME TO DISPERSE. THE MEN WITH GUNS MUST BE READY TO FOLLOW WHEN I GIVE THE WORD.

BARELY AN HOUR LATER, JANNO AND HIS CO-PILOT ARRIVED OVER THE APPROACHES TO HERICON.
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THINGS. KASSAR'S MEN ARE ON THE SHORE AND SOME HAVE GUNS.
MAKE A LOW PASS BETWEEN THEM AND THE ICEBERG, JANNO, IT MIGHT WARN THEM OFF.


THE SUGGESTION WAS WELL-MEANT, BUT NEITHER MAN KNEW THAT THE SEA WAS AWASH WITH HEAT GUN FUEL, AND, AS THEIR EXHAUST FLAMES SWEPT THE SURFACE...

BY ALL THE GODS! THE WHOLE OCEAN IS ABLAZE!
AND IT WAS WE WHO SET IT ALIGHT, JANNO.
ON THE ICE FLOE THE TERRIFIED NIVATIANS REELED BACK FROM THE ADVANCING WALL OF FLAME...
IT IS A HERICON TRICK. THEY KNOW WE CANNOT STAND HEAT...
GET BELOW, ALL OF YOU. WE MUST FIND SOME OTHER WAY OF DEALING WITH THESE FIENDS ON THE LAND.
WHEN THE SLOWLY SPREADING FUEL REACHED THE FOOT OF THE ICE-CLIFF, ITS INTENSE HEAT BEGAN TO AFFECT THE STRUCTURE.
TRIGO SENT US HERE TO PREVENT A WAR, AND NOW IT LOOKS AS THOUGH WE MAY HAVE STARTED ONE.
MAKE ANOTHER LOW PASS OVER THE HERICONS, JANNO.
ON THE LAND, KING KASSAR WATCHED THE APPROACHING TRIGAN CRAFT WITH SOME SUSPICION.
A TRIGAN WAR PLANE... WHAT CUNNING GAME IS THIS DO YOU THINK, ROLVAR?
I KNOW, MAJESTY. BUT I THINK WE MUST STRIKE AT THE NIVATIANS NOW, WHATEVER THE TRIGANS MAY BE PLANNING.
THE UNEXPECTED LIGHTING OF THE HEAT-GUN FUEL HAD CREATED A SITUATION WHICH JANNO HAD NOT PLANNED FOR.
I LIKE IT NOT, ROLVAR.IT WOULD SEEM THE TRIGANS ARE AGAINST US TOO. PREPARE TO OPEN FIRE.

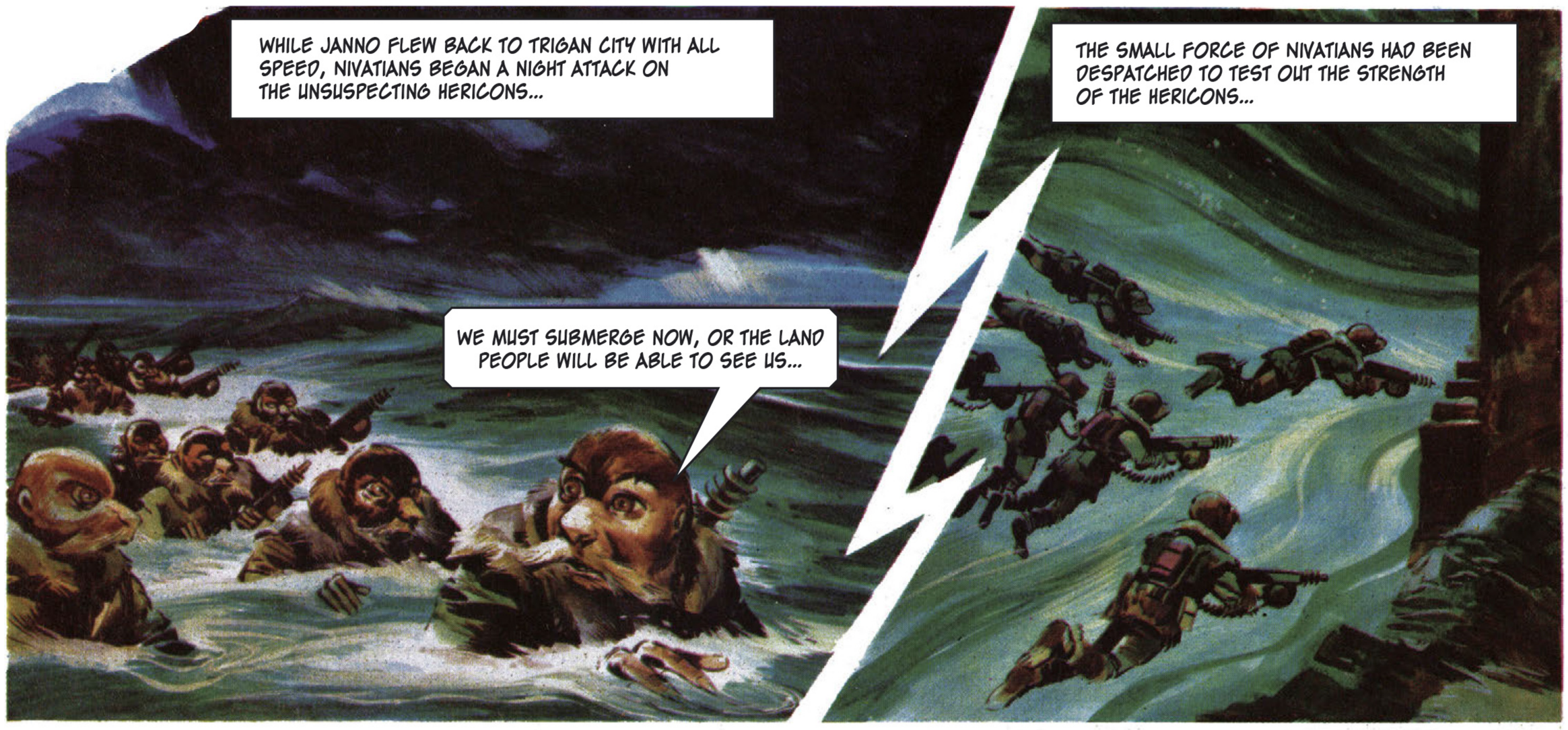

BUT THE TRIGANS WERE WARY.
BY THE STARS! THEY ARE FIRING AT US, JANNO! SHALL I RETURN IT?
NO, OR WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER WAR ON OUR HANDS.

IT IS UNDAMAGED. TAKE COVER. IF IT RETURNS WE SHALL BE NO MATCH FOR ITS WEAPONS.

BUT JANNO WAS WISE ENOUGH TO REALISE THE DANGER IN FIRING AT THE HERICONS.
WE HAVE FAILED OUR MISSION. IF WE TRY TO LAND NOW BOTH SIDES WILL ATTACK US. THERE IS NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO RETURN. WE MUST FLY THROUGH THE NIGHT.

LORD TRIGO MAY BE MY BROTHER-IN-LAW, BUT HE HAS NO RIGHT TO PREVENT US DEFENDING OURSELVES. SET THOSE WHO HAVE WEAPONS ON WATCH BY THE SHORE, ROLVAR.
IT SHALL BE DONE, MAJESTY.

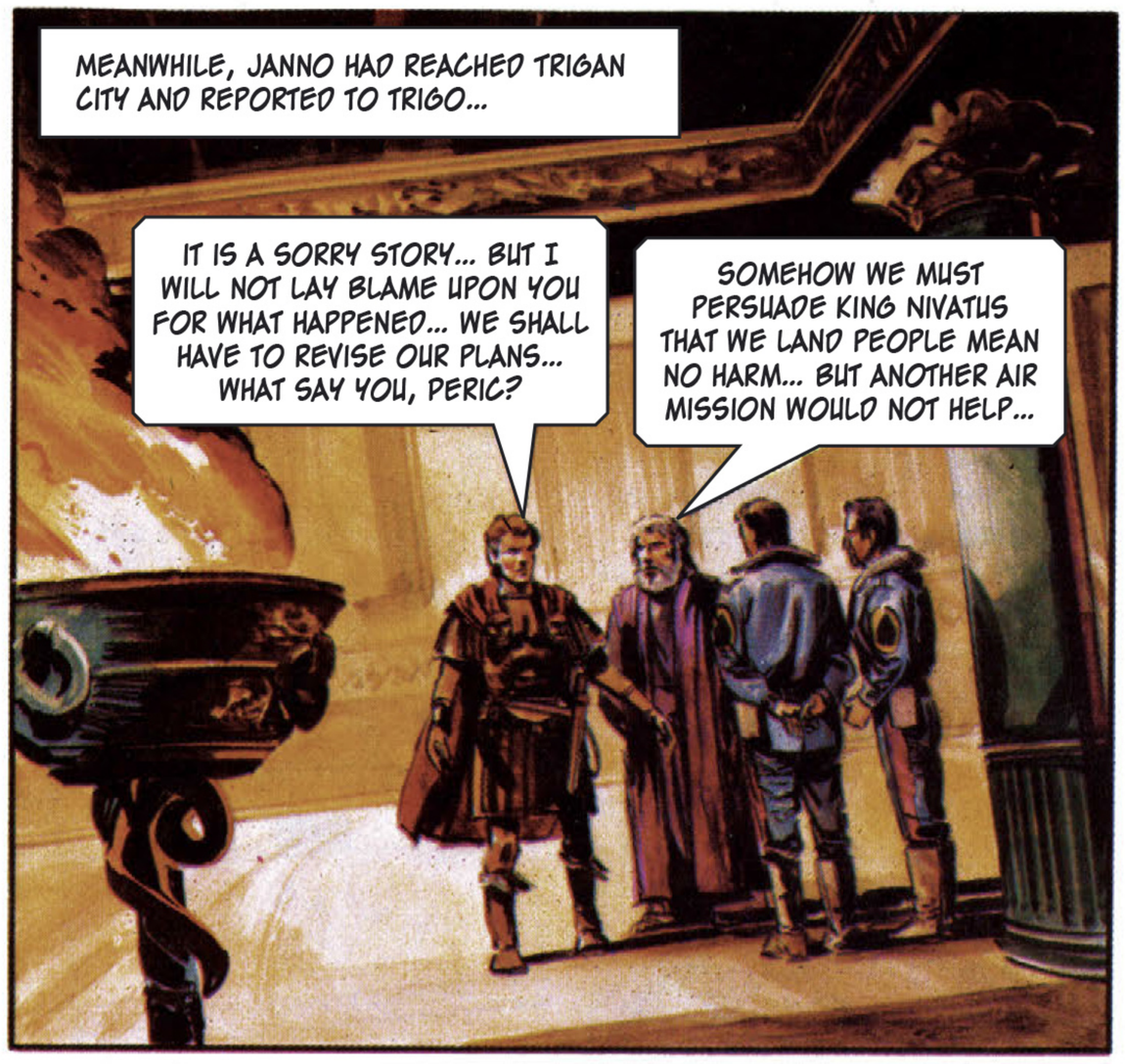
MEANWHILE, ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE ICE-FLOE.
REMEMBER, WHEN WE ARE LESS THAN HALF A LEAGUE FROM SHORE WE MUST SWIM UNDERWATER.


WHILE JANNO FLEW BACK TO TRIGAN CITY WITH ALL SPEED, NIVATIANS BEGAN A NIGHT ATTACK ON THE UNSUSPECTING HERICONS...
WE MUST SUBMERGE NOW, OR THE LAND PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE US...
THE SMALL FORCE OF NIVATIANS HAD BEEN DESPATCHED TO TEST OUT THE STRENGTH OF THE HERICONS...

BY THE ICE GODS! THE COUNTRY OF THE LAND PEOPLE IS IN A SORRY STATE... PERHAPS THEY, TOO, HAVE SUFFERED A CATASTROPHE... AND IT COULD BE THEY FEEL THREATENED...

A SHORT DISTANCE FROM WHERE THE SMALL GROUP OF ICE PEOPLE HAD LANDED, HERICON GUARDS WERE WATCHING THE COASTLINE...
SSSSH... QUIET... I THINK I HEAR A MOVEMENT...
THEN LET US INVESTIGATE... DON'T WAIT FOR THEM TO ATTACK.

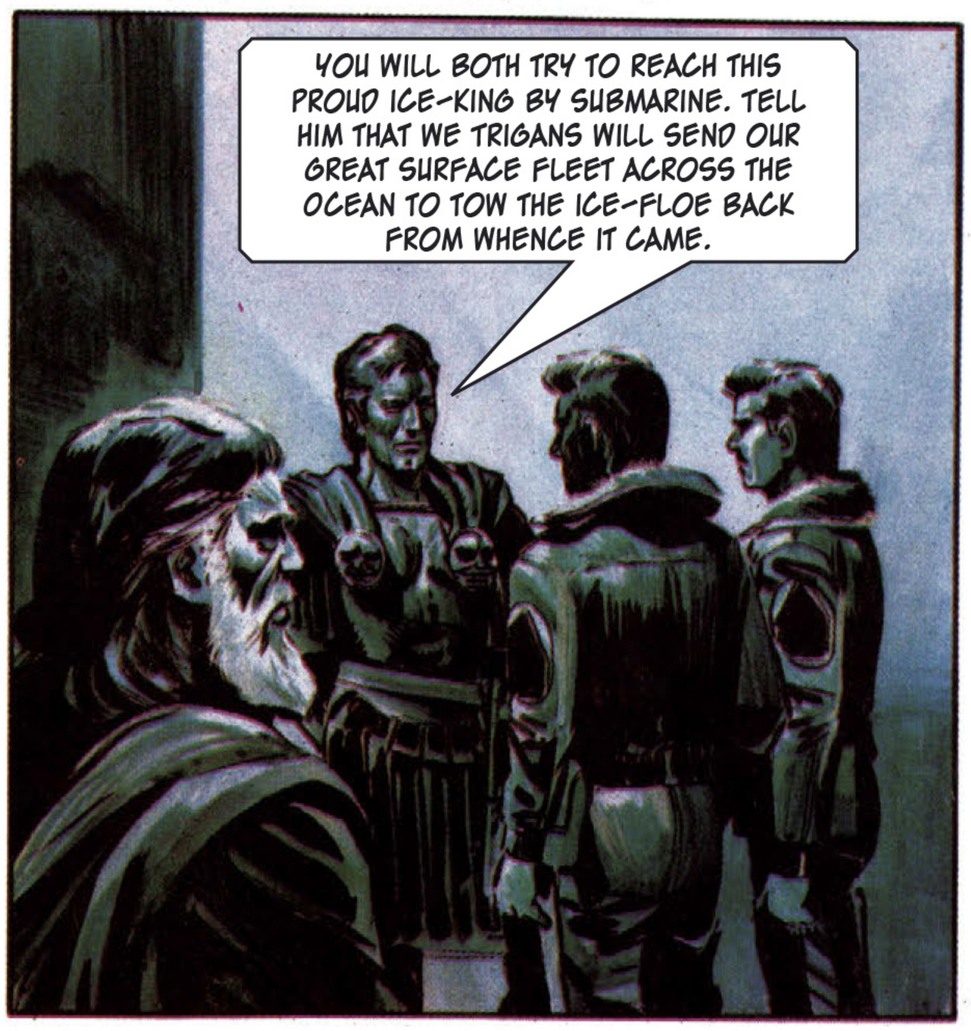
AND WITHIN THIRTY SECONDS, THE TRAGEDY WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED, OCCURRED...
FALL BACK... WARN THE OTHERS... THESE DEVILS OUTNUMBER US...
AAAAAH!

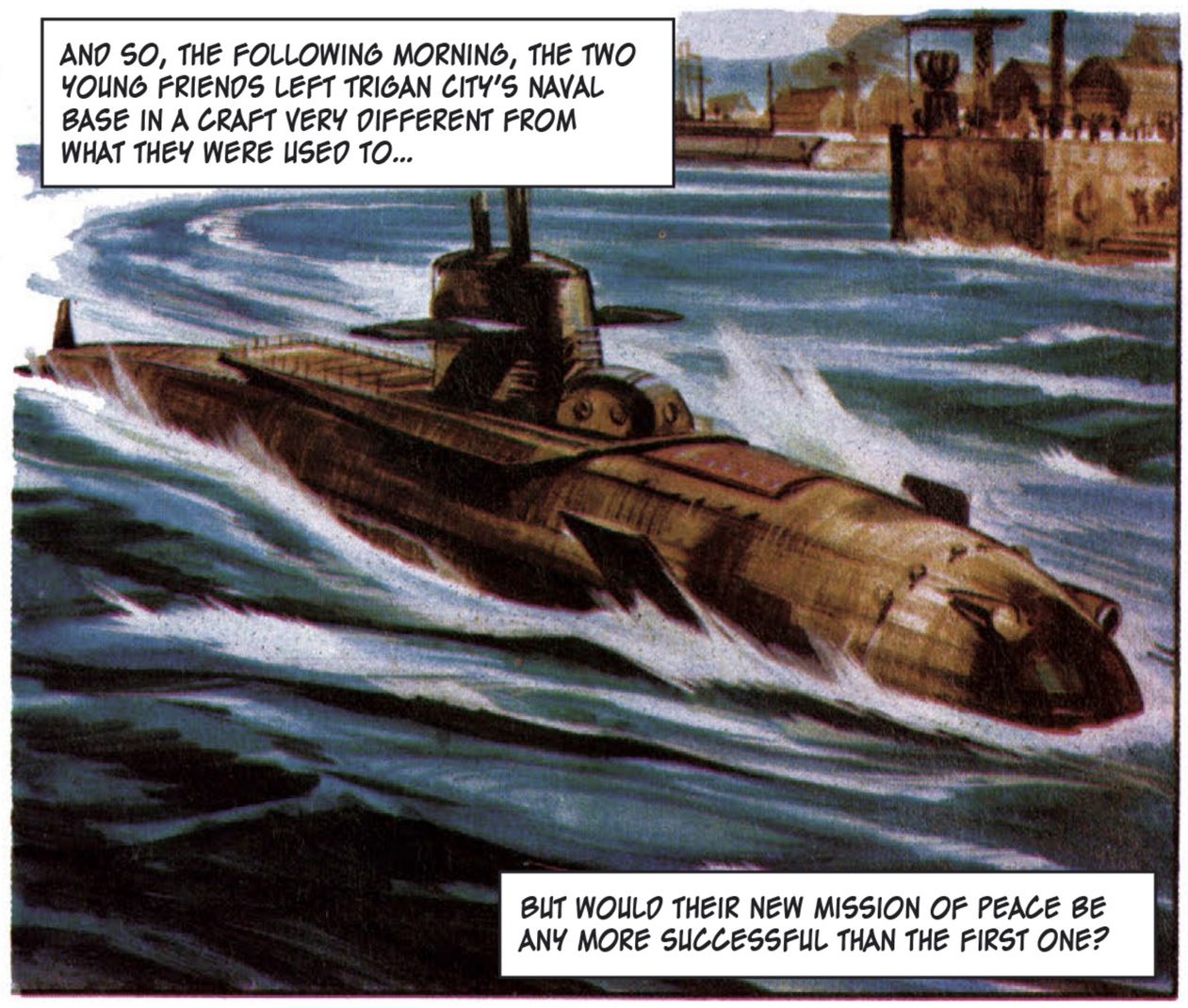

MEANWHILE, JANNO HAD REACHED TRIGAN CITY AND REPORTED TO TRIGO...
IT IS A SORRY STORY... BUT I WILL NOT LAY BLAME UPON YOU FOR WHAT HAPPENED... WE SHALL HAVE TO REVISE OUR PLANS... WHAT SAY YOU, PERIC?
SOMEHOW WE MUST PERSUADE KING NIVATUS THAT WE LAND PEOPLE MEAN NO HARM... BUT ANOTHER AIR MISSION WOULD NOT HELP...

AND IN ANY CASE, LORD TRIGO, THE SOLUTION TO THE WHOLE PROBLEM LIES IN RETURNING THE ICE PEOPLE TO THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.
BUT IF WE CANNOT SEND ANOTHER ATMOSPHERE CRAFT, WE HAVE NO CHANCE OF ACHIEVING EITHER OBJECTIVE.

THERE IS A WAY IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE... BY SEA. NOT ON THE SURFACE BUT UNDER IT, IN ONE OF OUR SUBMERSIBLE CRAFT.

AHH... WITHOUT YOUR WISDOM WE SHOULD INDEED BE LOST, OLD FRIEND... AND I CAN NOW SEE HOW TO GET THE NIVATIANS BACK TO THE POLAR REGION OF ELEKTON.


YOU WILL BOTH TRY TO REACH THIS PROUD ICE-KING BY SUBMARINE. TELL HIM THAT WE TRIGANS WILL SEND OUR GREAT SURFACE FLEET ACROSS THE OCEAN TO TOW THE ICE-FLOE BACK FROM WHENCE IT CAME.

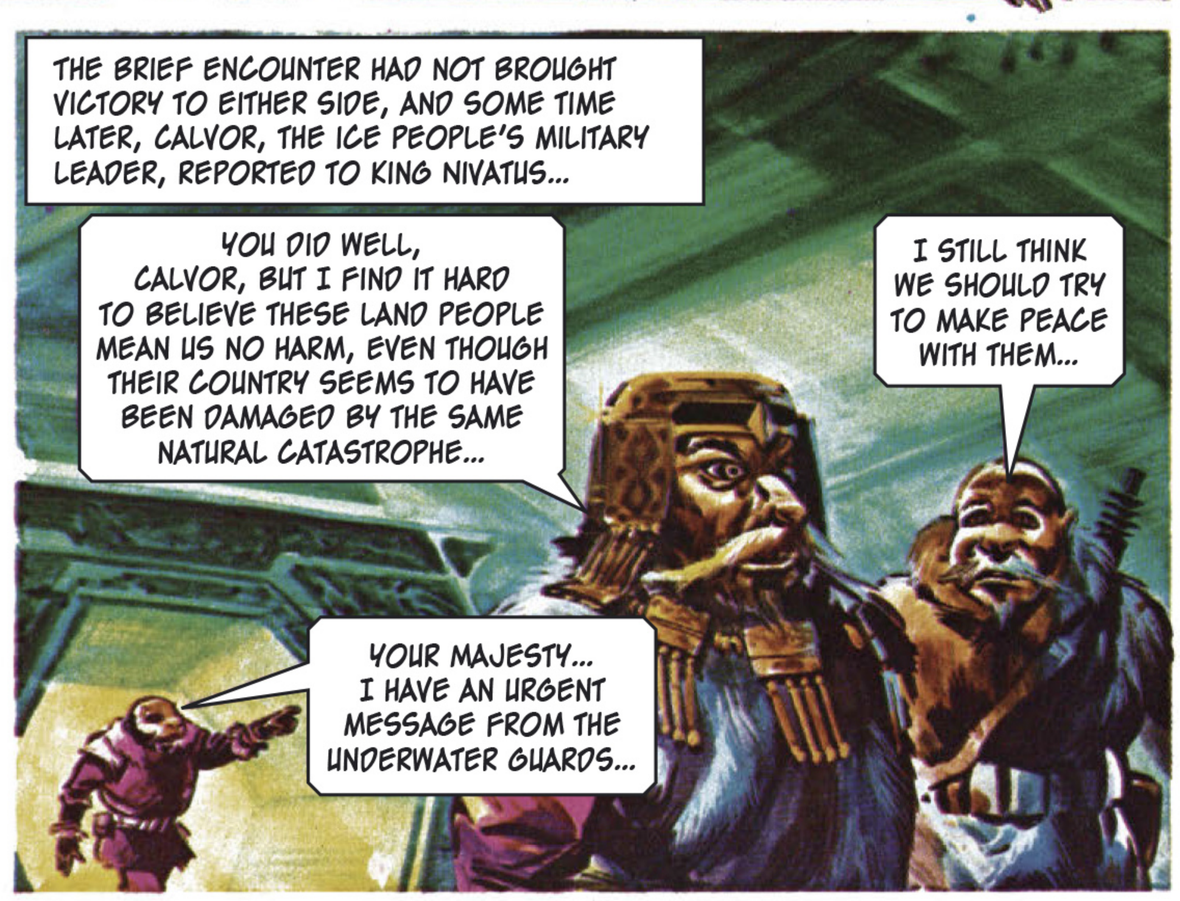

AND SO, THE FOLLOWING MORNING, THE TWO YOUNG FRIENDS LEFT TRIGAN CITY'S NAVAL BASE IN A CRAFT VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT THEY WERE USED TO...
BUT WOULD THEIR NEW MISSION OF PEACE BE ANY MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN THE FIRST ONE?

THE GREAT BATTLE SUBMARINE WITH JANNO AND HIS AIDE ON BOARD APPROACHED THE UNDERWATER SECTION OF THE GIANT ICE-FLOE WITH CAUTION...
STOP ENGINES... OUR SENSORS SHOW WE ARE BARELY TWENTY SPANS FROM THE ICE...

INSIDE THE HULL, JANNO PREPARED TO MAKE A DANGEROUS EXCURSION INTO THE SEA...
THIS IS AS CLOSE AS I DARE TAKE HER, SIR... THERE MUST BE A MILLION TONS OF JAGGED ICE OUT THERE... I'VE HAD YOUR HEAT GUNS SPECIALLY WATER-PROOFED.
THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY, CAPTAIN... WE HAVE DECIDED NOT TO TAKE ANY WEAPONS... WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ON A PEACE MISSION, REMEMBER...

ON THE SURFACE, THE SITUATION HAD BEEN FAR FROM PEACEFUL THE PREVIOUS EVENING WHEN THE NIVATIANS AND HERICONS CLASHED...
RETURN TO THE WATER... THE HEAT GUNS CANNOT HARM US THERE!
AAAAAGH!

...BOTH SIDES HAD SUFFERED HEAVY CASUALTIES...
YEEEEAGH!


THE BRIEF ENCOUNTER HAD NOT BROUGHT VICTORY TO EITHER SIDE, AND SOME TIME LATER, CALVOR, THE ICE PEOPLE'S MILITARY LEADER, REPORTED TO KING NIVATUS...
YOU DID WELL, CALVOR, BUT I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THESE LAND PEOPLE MEAN US NO HARM, EVEN THOUGH THEIR COUNTRY SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DAMAGED BY THE SAME NATURAL CATASTROPHE...
I STILL THINK WE SHOULD TRY TO MAKE PEACE WITH THEM...
YOUR MAJESTY... I HAVE AN URGENT MESSAGE FROM THE UNDERWATER GUARDS...

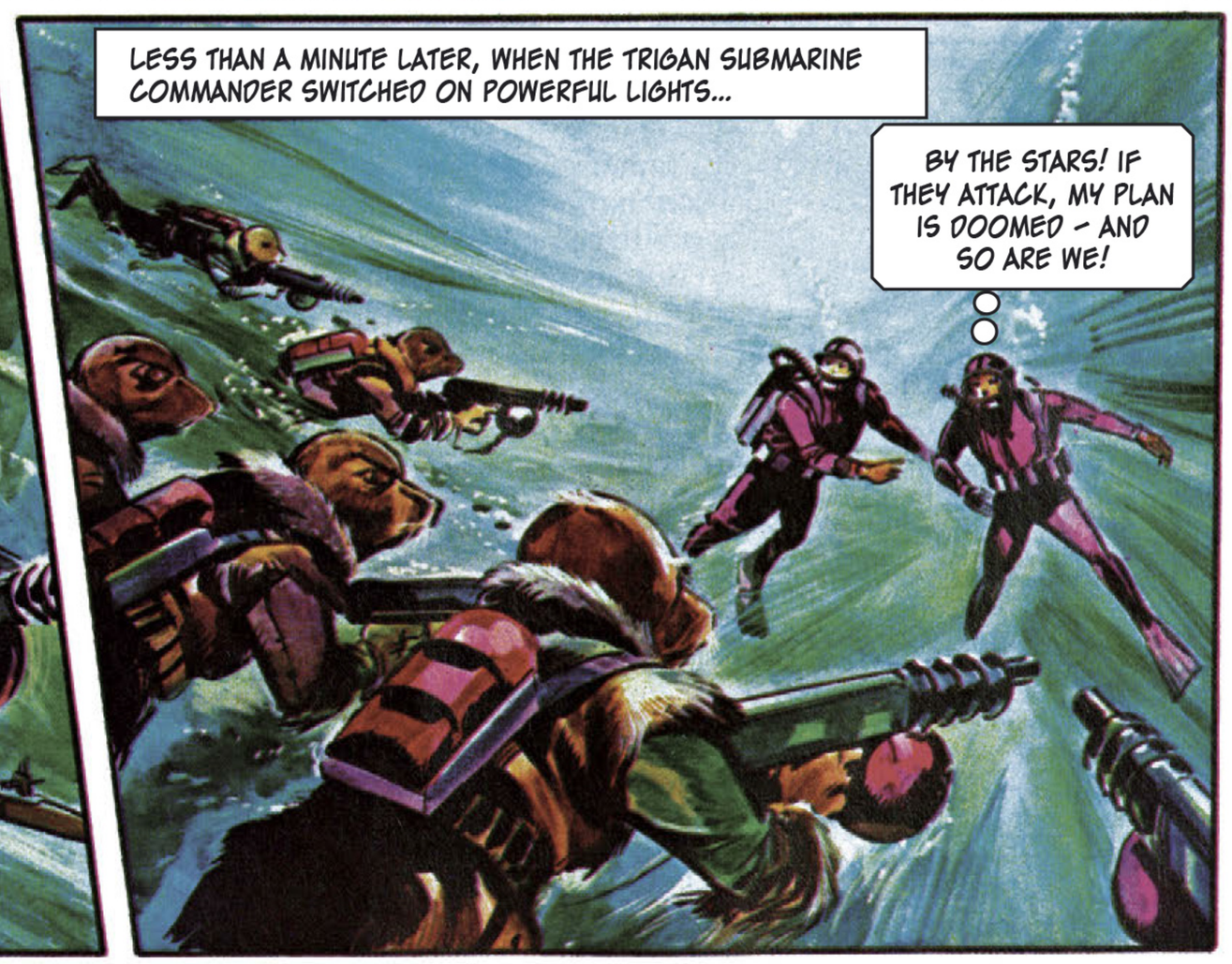
A LARGE UNDERWATER VESSEL IS CIRCLING NEAR THE LOWER CAVERNS, SIRE... IT APPEARS TO BE ARMED.
SO, WE ARE BEING ATTACKED FROM BELOW AS WELL... WHAT SAY YOU NOW, CALVOR? WHAT FURTHER PROOF OF THE LAND PEOPLE'S AGGRESSION DO YOU NEED?
NONE, IT WOULD SEEM, YOUR MAJESTY...

THEN TAKE OUT AN UNDER-SEA PATROL... WE MUST TRY TO DESTROY IT BEFORE IT DESTROYS US...

AT THAT VERY MOMENT, THE TWO TRIGANS WERE ENTERING THE SUBMARINE'S HUGE AIRLOCK...
GOOD LUCK, JANNO... I AM UNEASY THAT YOU HAVE NO WEAPONS...
IT IS A CHANCE WE MUST TAKE, CAPTAIN...

AND AS THEY EMERGED INTO SEMI-DARKNESS...

...AN ARMED GROUP OF NIVATIANS SLIPPED INTO THE SEA FROM AN UNDERWATER ICE CAVERN...


LESS THAN A MINUTE LATER, WHEN THE TRIGAN SUBMARINE COMMANDER SWITCHED ON POWERFUL LIGHTS...
BY THE STARS! IF THEY ATTACK, MY PLAN IS DOOMED - AND SO ARE WE!

JANNO AND HIS COMRADE WATCHED ANXIOUSLY AS THE ARMED NIVATIANS SWAM TOWARDS THEM AND SIGNALLED TO EACH OTHER THAT THEY WOULD STICK TO THEIR PLAN TO NOT SHOW AGGRESSION.
CALVOR, THE LEADER OF THE GROUP, COULD SEE THAT THE TWO COMMANDERS WERE UNARMED, AND HE AND HIS NIVATIANS DID NOT OPEN FIRE WITH THEIR FREEZER WEAPONS.
ONCE INSIDE THE ICE CAVERNS, THE TRIGANS EXPLAINED THE REASON FOR THEIR VISIT.
WE COME TO OFFER HELP. THE HERICONS ARE ALSO OUR FRIENDS. THIS FIGHTING BETWEEN YOU MUST END.
WE DO NOT WISH WAR EITHER. BUT HOW IS IT TO BE STOPPED? OUR KING DOES NOT TRUST YOU. COME, WE WILL TAKE YOU TO HIM.
KING NIVATUS LISTENED INTENTLY TO WHAT JANNO HAD TO SAY.
I HAVE HEARD THAT THE LAND PEOPLE HAVE MIGHTY SHIPS. WHAT PROOF CAN YOU GIVE ME THAT THEY WILL MOVE OUR WHOLE COUNTRY?
LET US GIVE A DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER OF OUR UNDERSEA VESSEL. I GIVE YOU MY WORD AS THE NEPHEW OF EMPEROR TRIGO THAT NO FURTHER PROOF WILL BE NEEDED.
VERY WELL. BUT ONE OF YOU WILL REMAIN HOSTAGE. ANY TRICKERY, AND THE ONE THAT CHOOSES TO REMAIN WILL DIE.
THERE WAS NO CHOICE AS FAR AS JANNO WAS CONCERNED. HE REMAINED WHILE HE SENT HIS COLLEAGUE BACK TO THE SUB-MARINE WITH STRICT INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITS COMMANDER.
ALL AVAILABLE CREW TO THE AIRLOCK. TAKE GRAPPLING HOOKS AND LONG LINES. ENGINEERING OFFICER TO STAND BY WITH MAIN ENGINES.
I WILL ACT AS UNDERWATER GUIDE, COMMANDER.

JANNO'S PLAN WAS TO HAVE THE SUBMARINE FIX TOW LINES TO THE SMALL ICEBERG WHICH HE HAD BURNED AWAY FROM THE MAIN ICE-FLOE.
JANNO HELD HIS BREATH AS HE WAITED FOR THE SUBMARINE TO BEGIN ITS TOWING OPERATION.
IF SOMETHING DOES NOT HAPPEN SOON, THIS MISSION WILL HAVE FAILED – AND I WON'T BE AROUND TO REPORT IT!
FIRST SLOWLY, AND THEN MORE RAPIDLY, THE ICEBERG BEGAN TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE MAIN FLOE.
THANK THE STARS!
YOU WERE RIGHT, TRIGAN. IT CAN BE DONE, BUT NOW WHERE IS YOUR EMPEROR'S BATTLE FLEET?
JANNO HAD FORESEEN THIS REQUEST AND THE SUBMARINE COMMANDER HAD ALREADY BEEN TOLD TO SEND A RADIO MESSAGE TO THE TRIGAN BATTLE FLEET.
HOW ABOUT KING KASSAR, UNCLE?
HE IS A HARD MAN TO PERSUADE, BUT WHEN HIS DAUGHTER IS ALSO THE WIFE OF THE EMPEROR OF TRIGAN, HE HAS TO LISTEN!
IT WAS A SIGHT THE PLANET ELEKTON HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE, AND IT WAS NOT LIKELY TO SEE AGAIN, BUT IT BROUGHT FRESH HOPE AND LIFE TO THE PEACEFUL ICE PEOPLE...
...AND ENABLED THE POWERFUL TRIGAN EMPIRE TO COME TO THE AID OF ONE OF ITS MORE TOUCHY ALLIES IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED.
THE PEOPLE OF HERICON OWE YOU THEIR ETERNAL THANKS, TRIGO. YOU MIGHT HAVE TAUGHT US HOW MISUNDERSTANDINGS CAN LEAD TO CONFLICT.
YOU HAVE LEARNT, ALSO, I HOPE, THAT PEACE IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN WAR.
THE END

MIKE BUTTERWORTH

Mike Butterworth is primarily known in comic circles as the writer of *The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire*, but had previously written Battler Britton and *Buffalo Bill* strips for **Comet**, for **Sun** he wrote *Max Bravo*, *The Happy Hussar* and *Billy the Kid* (which was drawn by, amongst others, Don Lawrence). *The Trigan Empire* began in 1965 in **Ranger**, and continued when **Ranger** was absorbed into **Look and Learn** where it continued to be published through to 1982. From 1967 he also wrote crime novels under his full name, John Michael Butterworth, and gothic romances under the pseudonyms of Carola Salisbury and Sarah Kemp.

KEN ROSCOE

In addition to taking over the scripting of *The Rise & Fall of the Trigan Empire* after Mike Butterworth's departure, Ken Roscoe was also the editor of **Speed & Power**.

OLIVER FREY

Oliver Frey was born in Switzerland in 1948, and by the 60s he was studying at the London Film School, supporting himself by painting covers for **War Picture Library**. In the 1970s he replaced Don Lawrence as the main artist on *The Rise and Fall of The Trigan Empire*, and in the 1980s he worked on several *Dan Dare* stories for the revival of **Eagle**. Under the pen-name of Zack he drew many gay erotic comics including **Desert Studs**, **Hot for Boys**, and **Raw Recruits**. He also produced covers and serialised *The Terminal Man* for the computer games magazine **CRASH**, and created the art for the opening pre-title sequence of the 1978 **Superman** film.

GERRY WOOD

Before taking over the reins of *Trigan Empire*, Gerry Wood painted numerous covers for **Battle Picture Library** and **Speed & Power**. His first painted comics strip was *A Leap into the Future* for **World of Wonder**. He would paint *Trigan Empire* until its initial run finished in the early 1980s, and afterwards he would provide illustration work for many educational books.

GREAT DEEDS ARE ETERNAL!

The penultimate omnibus edition of **The Rise and Fall of the Trigan Empire** collects all the strips published in *Look and Learn* from 1977 through to 1979: from Oliver Frey and co-creator Mike Butterworth's last work on the series, to the beginning of Ken Roscoe and Gerry Wood's run.

Reprinted for the first time are thirteen fantastically-painted stories featuring the Emperor Trigo as he faces off against the evil Catons, chases down traitorous officers, and explores hidden regions of the planet Elekton.

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